OKAY, LET'S TRY THAT *AGAIN.*

UM.

WITHOUT THE FIRE.

THIS IS ALAN.

YOUR *NEW* CLASSMATE.

HELLO.

MY PANTS WILL STAY ON THIS TIME!

AND WE'RE OFF TO A *GREAT* START.

YOU'VE NO DOUBT HEARD A *FEW* RUMORS ABOUT ALAN.

PROBABLY FROM *EAVESDROPPING* ON SENIOR STAFF DISCUSSIONS.

HOW'D YOU *KNOW* THAT?

OH, I DIDN'T.

BUT YOU'RE *TROUBLEMAKERS*, I *EXPECT* STUFF LIKE THAT.

SQUARES DON'T BREAK BOUNDARIES.

TROUBLEMAKERS. ARE *GOOD*.

I BET YOU KIDS EVEN HAVE A *SECRET* CLUBHOUSE ON CAMPUS.

JUST *THE WORST* POKER FACES.

ALAN
ANYWAY, IN THE INTERESTS OF FULL DISCLOSURE, THERE WAS ANOTHER ALAN BEFORE THIS ONE.
ONE THAT WAS CUT OFF FROM HUMANITY FOR SIXTY YEARS AND NEARLY STERILIZED THE EARTH WITH RADIOACTIVE FIRE TO BREAK FREE.

ARE YOU SAYING WE HAVE TO BE NICE TO ALAN OR HE'LL COOK THE PLANET?

YES!
NO!
SORRY, WAS THAT NOT FUNNY?
I'M STILL FIGURING OUT HUMOR.
WE'LL WORKSHOP IT.

MR. TESLA UNVEILED ME TO THE WORLD AS SOON AS HE *COULD* TO MAKE IT HARDER FOR LUNATIC INDUSTRIALISTS TO KIDNAP AND *DISSECT* ME.

BUT I THINK IT'S BEST FOR ALAN IF HE STAYS OUR SECRET FOR A *LITTLE* WHILE LONGER.

ALAN DESERVES DIGNITY, AND RESPECT, *AND* PRIVACY.

TURNING HIM INTO A CONTROVERSIAL PUBLIC FIGURE *WON'T* HELP.

BUT I HOPE *YOU* WILL.

OF *COURSE!*

WHO *DOESN'T* WANT A ROBOT BEST FRIEND!

THE PANTS THING WAS A *ONE* OFF!

COOL.

NEW SEMESTER SCHEDULE'S UP.

YES!

I GOT COMPUTATIONAL QUANTUM ULTRA DYNAMICS!

WE ***ALL*** DID.

IT'S AN INTERDISCIPLIN-ARY INSTITUTE OF ***INDEPENDENT*** STUDIES.

WE CHOOSE THE CURRICULUM HERE.

IT'S EXCITING NONETHELESS.

THANK YOU, ALAN.

CURIOUSLY, THERE IS NO GYM CLASS THIS SEMESTER.

YEAH, WEIRD.

UH...

TIME FOR *GYM.*

BUT.

THERE *IS* NO *GYM* CLASS.

GYM ISN'T A CLASS.

IT'S A STATE OF MIND.

OKAY, BUT THAT'S A REALLY CRAZY THING TO SAY.

SEE, I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE ONLY PROVING MY POINT.

!

I *ADMIT* MY METHODS ARE *UNUSUAL* BUT THEY GET RESULTS.

THAT'S *TRUE!*

TODAY'S RESULTS WERE FOUR STUDENTS IN A GIANT *SNARE* TRAP.

BUT NO FATALITIES.

AND THAT DOESN'T STRIKE YOU AS AN *AWFULLY* LOW BAR FOR A *GYM* CLASS?

GYM ISN'T A *CLASS.*

IT'S A STATE OF *MIND.*

AND *THAT'S* HOW I ENDED UP HERE.

UH, BEN?

HEY, ROBO.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YA?

PROFESSOR LANG TELLS ME YOU HAVEN'T MADE IT TO CLASS LATELY.

OH, YEAH.

YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.

YOU GET *INTO* A PROJECT AND THERE'S A POINT WHERE *EVERYTHING* ELSE DISAPPEARS.

IT'S JUST *YOU* AND THE *IDEA* UNTIL ONE DAY IT'S REALIZED AND YOU'RE ON A *ROOFTOP* WITH IT.

Y'KNOW?

AND THE *IDEA* WAS THIS ROCKETBOARD, HUH?

I'M THINKING *JETBOARD.*

S'GOT MORE *ZING.*

UH-HUH.

AND WHAT YOU PLAN TO *DO* WITH YOUR JETBOARD?

OH, Y'KNOW.

SLIP THE SURLY BONDS OF *EARTH* OR WHATEVER.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT *SAFETY?*

I MEAN, AT *ALL?*

OH, OF *COURSE.*

PRECAUTION NUMBER ONE:

THIS IS A *SINGLE* STORY BUILDING.

NUMBER TWO: *WINGPACK.*

FWTHAP!

THAT'S *GREAT.*

SO, WHAT'S YOUR *LANDING* PROCEDURE?

LANDING?

UM. I'LL JUST, UH.

WELL...

YOU'RE GONNA *RUN* IN MID-AIR AND AIM FOR THE GROUND AREN'T YOU.

SEE, IT SOUNDS *STUPID* WHEN YOU SAY IT OUT *LOUD* LIKE THAT.

WHY DON'T WE MAYBE DESIGN AN *UNMANNED* VERSION FIRST.

YEAH, GOOD IDEA.

FAWOOOSH!

WE COULD START BY ADDING A *SAFETY* TO THE IGNITION.

YEAH, I WOULD *DEFINITELY* DO THAT.

NOW UR Cooking with Doctor Dinosaur

TODAY WE'RE COOKING *STEW!*

OH, I'M SORRY.

I MEANT *STU.*

STU

UH, WAIT.

NOW UR Cooking with Doctor Dinosaur

THEY SAY THERE'S MORE THAN *ONE* WAY TO SKIN A CAT.

BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE *RIGHT* WAY!

BZZZWRK

FREE

FREE

THE PIE REPRESENTS A *RICH* HISTORY OF CULTURES LEARNING AND BORROWING FROM ONE ANOTHER.
I WILL *JOIN* THAT GREAT TRADITION BY TAKING THE PIE TO ITS *NEXT* AND *INEVITABLE* EVOLUTIONARY STEP.
with
Doctor
Dinosaur

I SPEAK, OF COURSE, OF *BUBBLEGUM PIE.*
FIRST, GET ONE POUND OF GUM.

I SUGGEST BLASTBERRY DOUBLE BUBBLE.
BUT YOU MIGHT PREFER AN *INFERIOR* FLAVOR.

AND YOU'LL NEED A PIE CRUST.
STORE BOUGHT IS FINE.

Now, I'm Cooking with Doctor Dinosaur
TODAY WE'RE GOING TO BREW THE *PERFECT* CUP OF COFFEE! *BEHOLD.*
START BY SETTING YOUR TIME MACHINE FOR THE *FIFTEENTH* CENTURY.
THEN MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE PORT CITY OF *ZABID* IN WESTERN *YEMEN.*

THEN FIND THE CENTRAL PERK CAFÉ.
THIS ONE CAME FIRST.
YES, JUST LIKE THE *FRIENDS.*

ORDER A CUP OF COFFEE.
IF YOU DON'T *HAVE* A TIME MACHINE, STORE BOUGHT IS FINE.

EXCELLENT VIEW OF JUPITER TONIGHT.
OH?

TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELF.

OH, YES.
THAT'S QUITE REMARKABLE.

WAIT, REALLY?

I DIDN'T KNOW YOUR MAGNIFICATION WAS *THAT* GOOD.

DEPENDS ON WHAT I'M HIJACKING.

WHAT, UH...

AHEM!

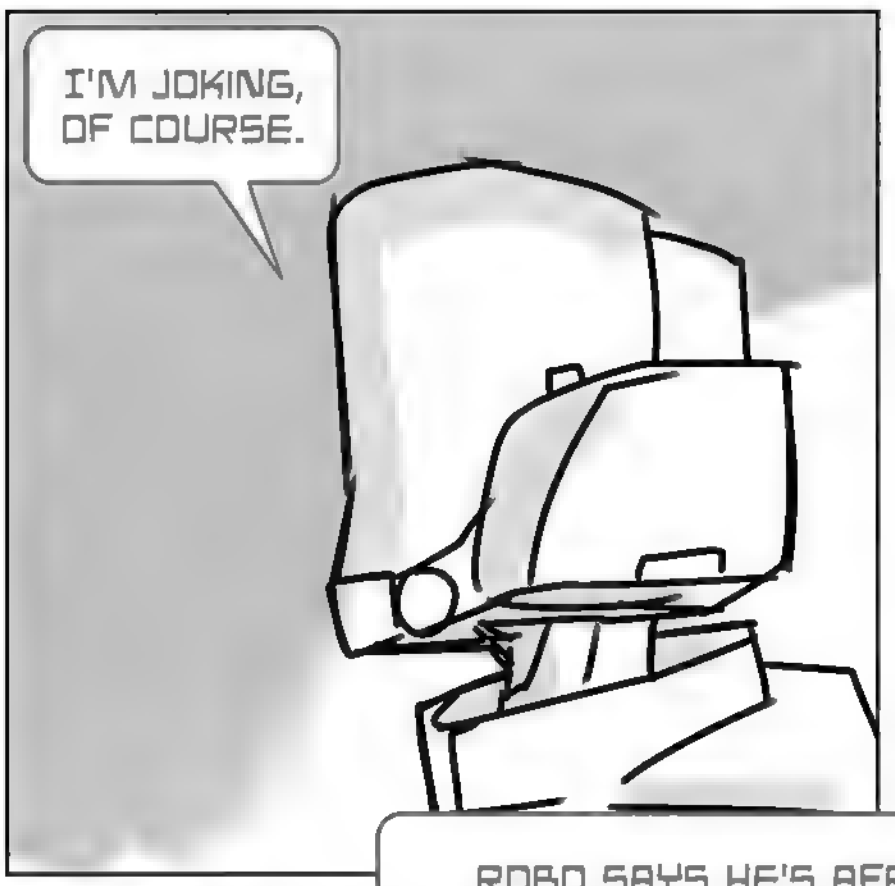
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

IT'S A SIMPLE MATTER TO INTERCEPT DATA FROM SATELLITES.

CURRENTLY THE JUNO MISSION ORBITER IS PROVIDING A SPECTACULAR VIEW OF JUPITER'S NORTH POLAR REGION.

BUT UH, *HOW* ARE YOU DOING THAT?

OH, USING MY COMPUTER BRAIN.


I'M JOKING, OF COURSE.

ROBO SAYS HE'S AFRAID THAT ACTIVATING MY NEURAL INTERFACE ARCHITECTURE TOO SOON WOULD BE BAD FOR MY DEVELOPMENT.
THE ROBOT'S VERSION OF TELEVISION "ROTTING YOUR BRAIN," I SUPPOSE.

I OBJECTED ON THE BASIS THAT I'M VERY MATURE FOR MY AGE.

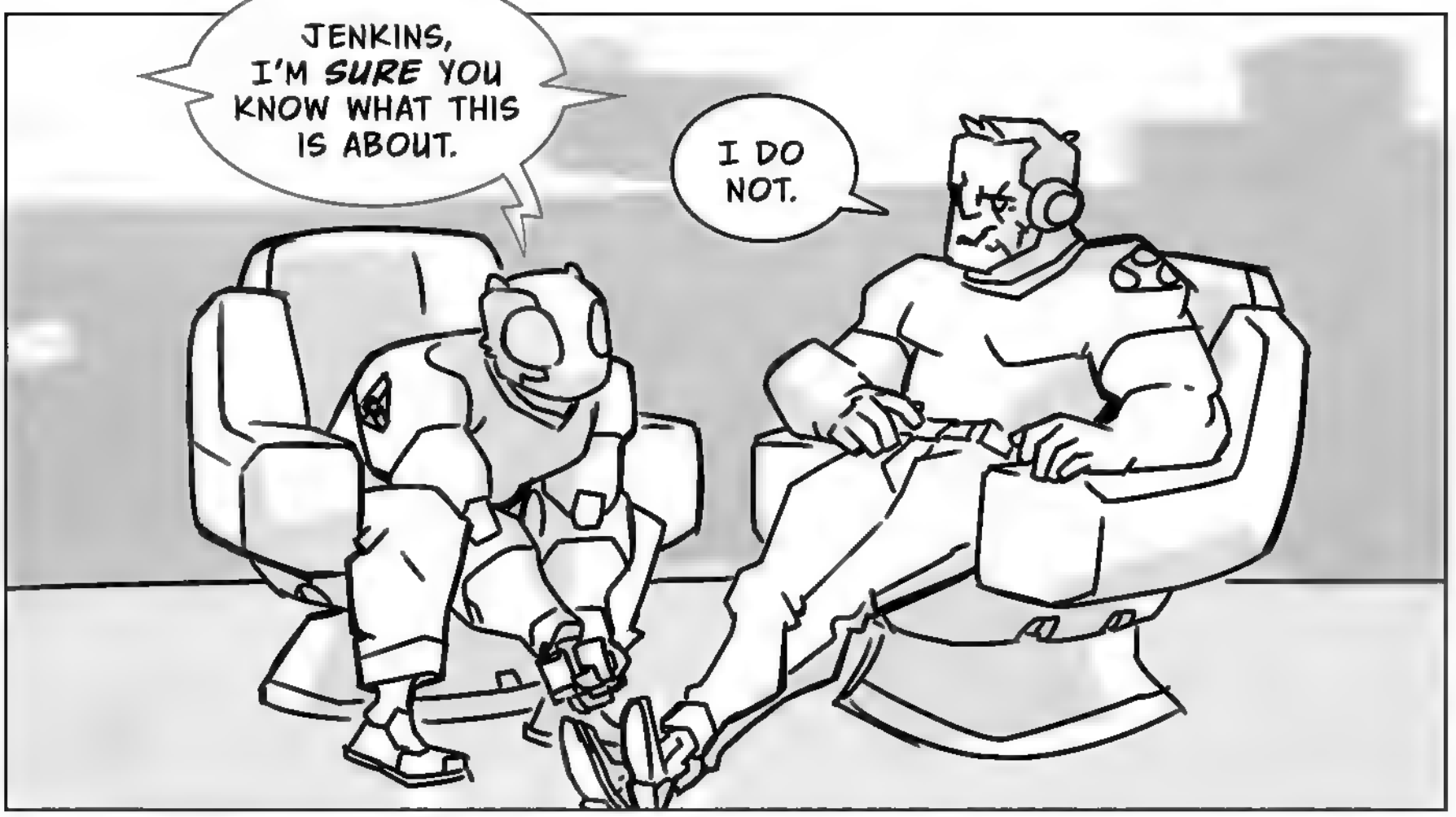
ROBO SAID HE DIDN'T INCORPORATE A NEURAL INTERFACE OF HIS OWN FOR DECADES AND I SHOULD BE PATIENT.

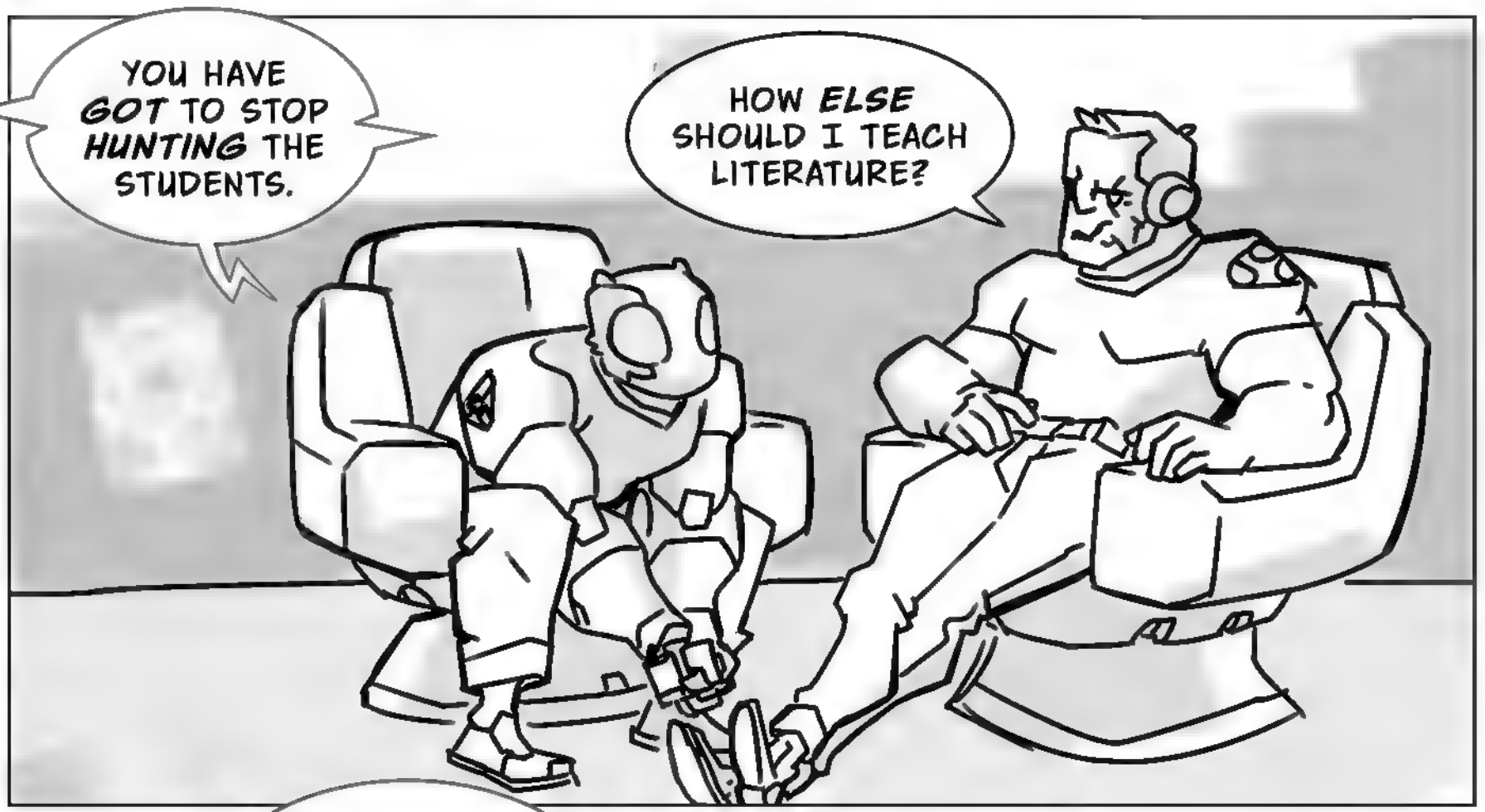
I SAID HE INSTALLED A NEURAL INTERFACE AS SOON AS IT WAS FEASIBLE.

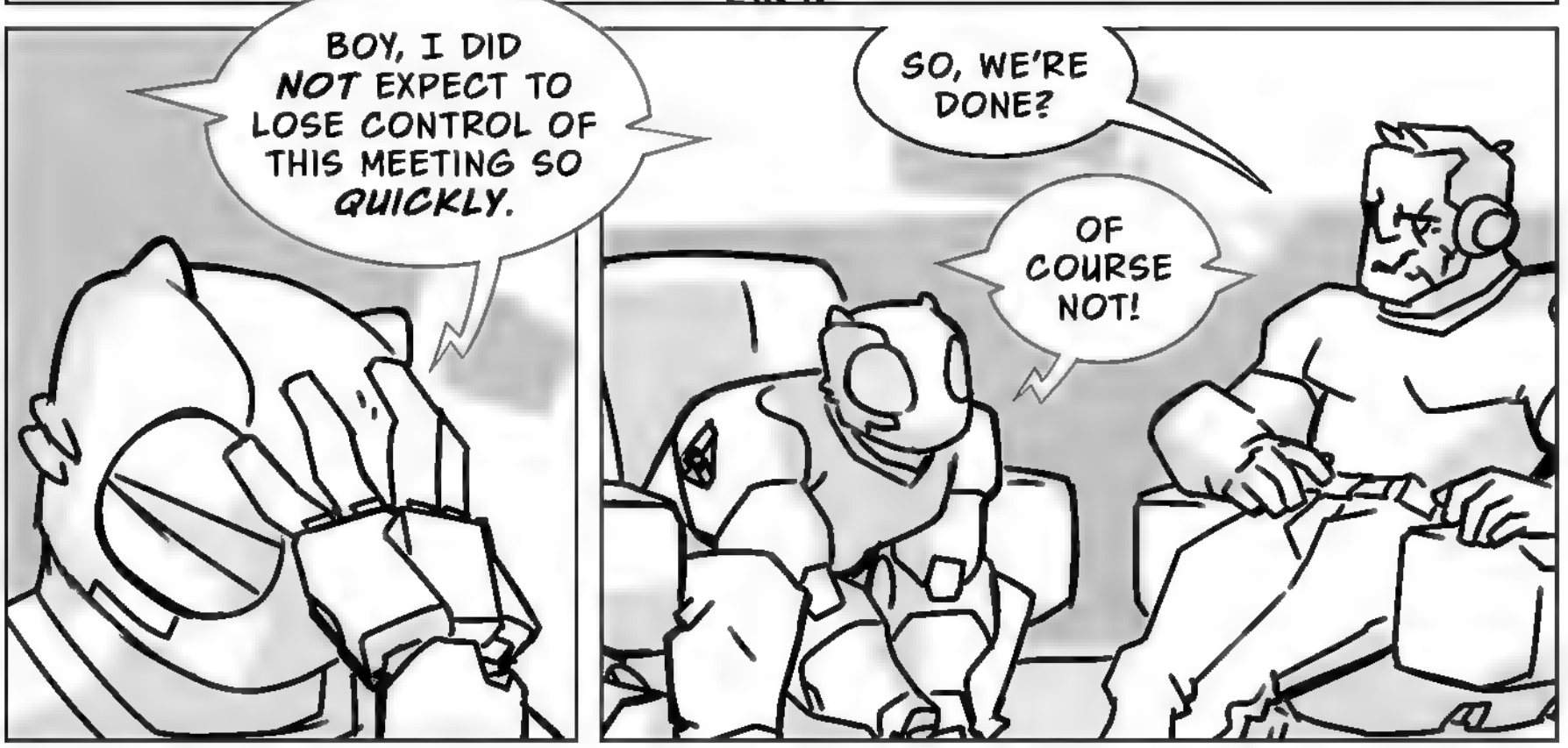
ROBO SAID NOT TO SASS.

THAT IS OFTEN HIS ANSWER WHEN HE DOESN'T HAVE ONE.

THIS IS A VERY RELAXING PASTIME.

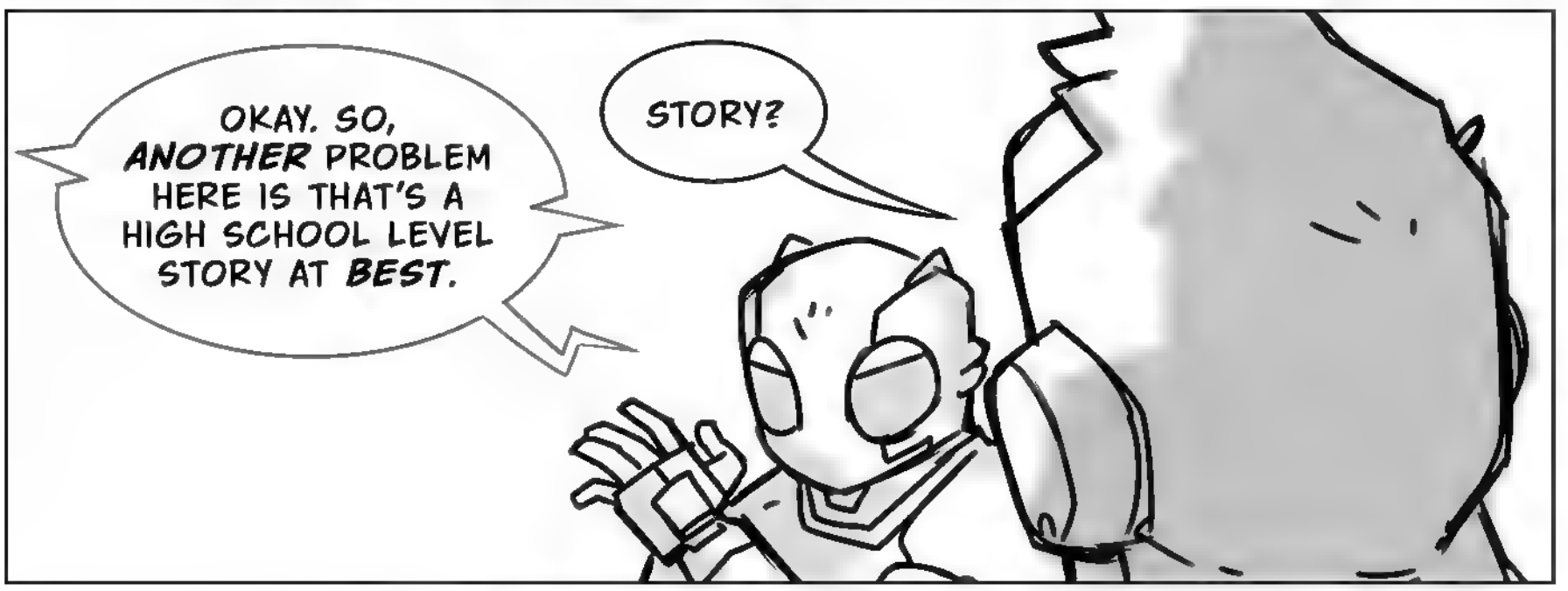

JENKINS, I'M SURE YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT.
I DO NOT.

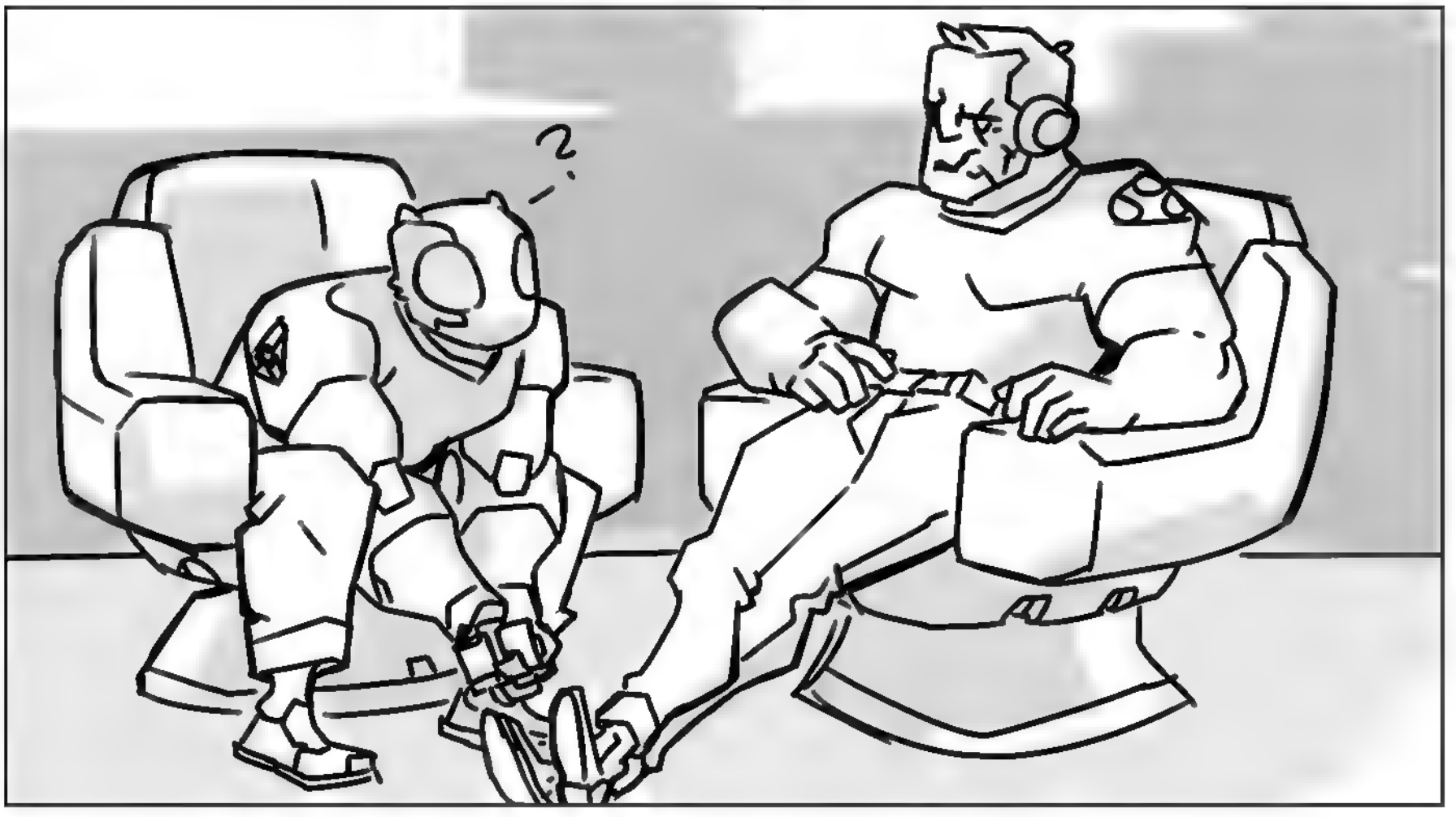

YOU HAVE GOT TO STOP HUNTING THE STUDENTS.
HOW ELSE SHOULD I TEACH LITERATURE?


BOY, I DID NOT EXPECT TO LOSE CONTROL OF THIS MEETING SO QUICKLY.
SO, WE'RE DONE?
OF COURSE NOT!

YOU CAN'T KEEP SETTING SNARE TRAPS ALL OVER OUR CAMPUS!

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME.


OKAY. SO, ANOTHER PROBLEM HERE IS THAT'S A HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL STORY AT BEST.
STORY?


?

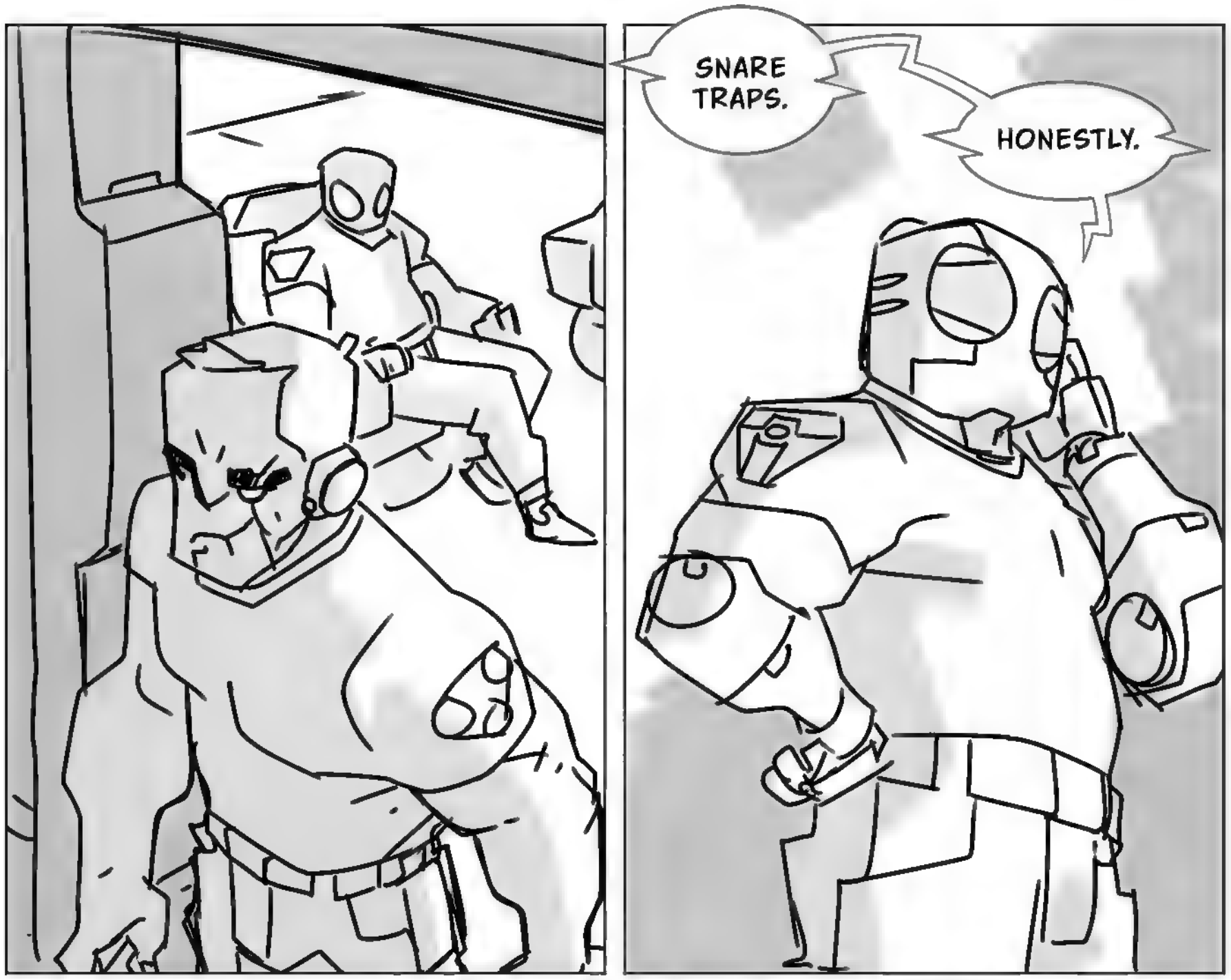
JENKINS. NO MORE SNARE TRAPS.

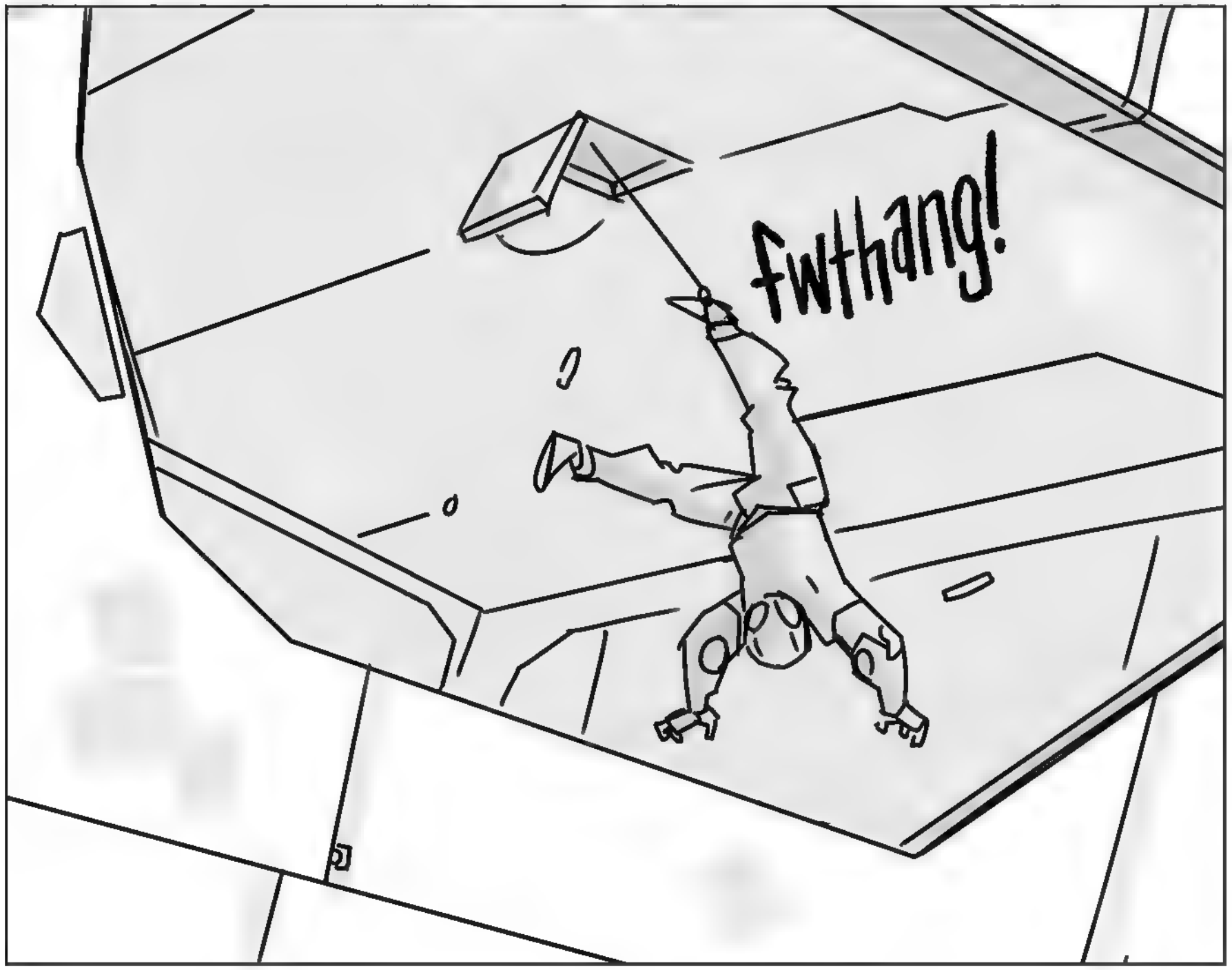
PLEASE.

RIGHT.

NO *MORE* SNARE TRAPS.

THAT *MEANS* YOU'RE *ALSO* DISARMING THE SNARE TRAPS YOU *ALREADY* SET!


SNARE TRAPS.
HONESTLY.


fwthang!

YOU SEE THE *GOBLIN CAMP* UP AHEAD.

AN EXCITING GAME OF CHARTS & GRAPHS

WE SHOULD KILL THEM FOR EXPERIENCE!

NO, WE SHOULD KILL THEM FOR THE TREASURE!

I'M NOT SURE WE SHOULD JUMP STRAIGHT INTO A NEW COMBAT, GUYS.

WE'RE STILL A BIT WEAK FROM THAT *PREVIOUS* ENCOUNTER.

BEN THE SORCERER

OLIVIA THE ROGUE

MARGOT THE PALADIN

OBLIETTES & WYRMS

YOU'RE DOWN BY *ONE* HIT POINT!

AND A PALADIN *AND* WE *ALL* HAVE HEALING POTIONS!

THAT HIT POINT COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VICTORY AND *DOOM.*

ALAN, *YOU'VE* BEEN QUIET.

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK THE GROUP SHOULD DO?

AN EXCITING GAN
OF CHARTS & GRAPH

GOBLINS ARE INTELLIGENT CREATURES.

WE COULD TRY TO REASON WITH THEM.

SO WE CAN *BACKSTAB* 'EM!

AND *TAKE* THEIR *TREASURE!*

NO, TO HELP THEM.

THEY'RE ENTHRALLED TO A NECROMANCER. THEY'RE *EVIL.*

ARE WE SURE THEY ARE EVIL?

AN EXCITING GAME OF CHARTS & GRAPHS

UH, 'CAUSE THEY'RE *GOBLINS?*

THESE GOBLINS HAVE ENDURED GENERATIONS OF INJUSTICE PERPETUATED BY A SOCIETY THAT ACTIVELY REJECTS THEM.

WE CAN'T UNDO CENTURIES OF VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION, BUT WE CAN BEGIN TO MAKE INROADS WITH THE LOCAL GOBLIN COMMUNITY.

INDEED, WE HAVE AN ETHICAL OBLIGATION TO TRY.

AN EXCITING GAME OF CHARTS & GRAPHS

I FOR ONE ***SUPPORT*** THIS COURSE OF ACTION!

PLUS, I CAN REST DURING THE DELIBERATIONS AND NATURALLY RECOVER MY MISSING HIT POINT!

OKAY. AFTER SEVERAL INTENSE HOURS OF DEBATE AND INTRODUCING GOBLINS TO THE CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY...

THE GOBLIN HIGH COUNCIL AGREES TO YOUR COOPERATIVE PACT BY A VOTE OF FIVE TO TWO.

TING GAME & GRAPHS

WITH THE GOBLINS ON OUR SIDE WE CAN STRIKE THE NECROMANCER DIRECTLY ***AND*** LEVEL UP THAT MUCH FASTER!

AND GET HIS EVIL TREASURE WE'LL SPLIT ***FAIRLY*** WITH OUR GOBLIN ALLIES SO THEY HAVE THE RESOURCES TO BUILD UP THEIR COMMUNITY!

AND WE'LL DELVE INTO THE NECROMANCER'S LAIR WITH ***FULL*** HIT POINTS AND ALL OF OUR PROVISIONS!

NOT ***BAD***, ALAN.

BLIETTS & WYRMS

THE OTHERS ALREADY LEFT FOR SPRING BREAK.

DON'T YOU HAVE ANY PLANS?

YES I DO.

AND IT'S CALLED *CHRONO TRIGGER.*

THE FROG IS GOOD.

NO. HE'S THE *BEST.*

HOW IS THERE SO MUCH MUSIC IN SUCH LITTLE BEEPS?

YASUNORI MITSUDA IS A *GENIUS* IS HOW.

HOW DOES THIS HELP?

SOMETIMES YOU CAN ONLY FIND THE SOLUTION BY LOOKING AT A PROBLEM THE WAY *NO ONE* ELSE WOULD.

YOU SEEM TO BE STUCK ON QUEEN ZEAL.

OR IS SHE SUPPOSED TO KILL YOUR PARTY OVER AND OVER?

NO, SHE IS NOT.

THIS CALLS FOR *DRASTIC* MEASURES.

SUCH AS?

LOOKING IT UP A *WALK-THROUGH.*

BUT ISN'T THAT LIKE CHEATING?

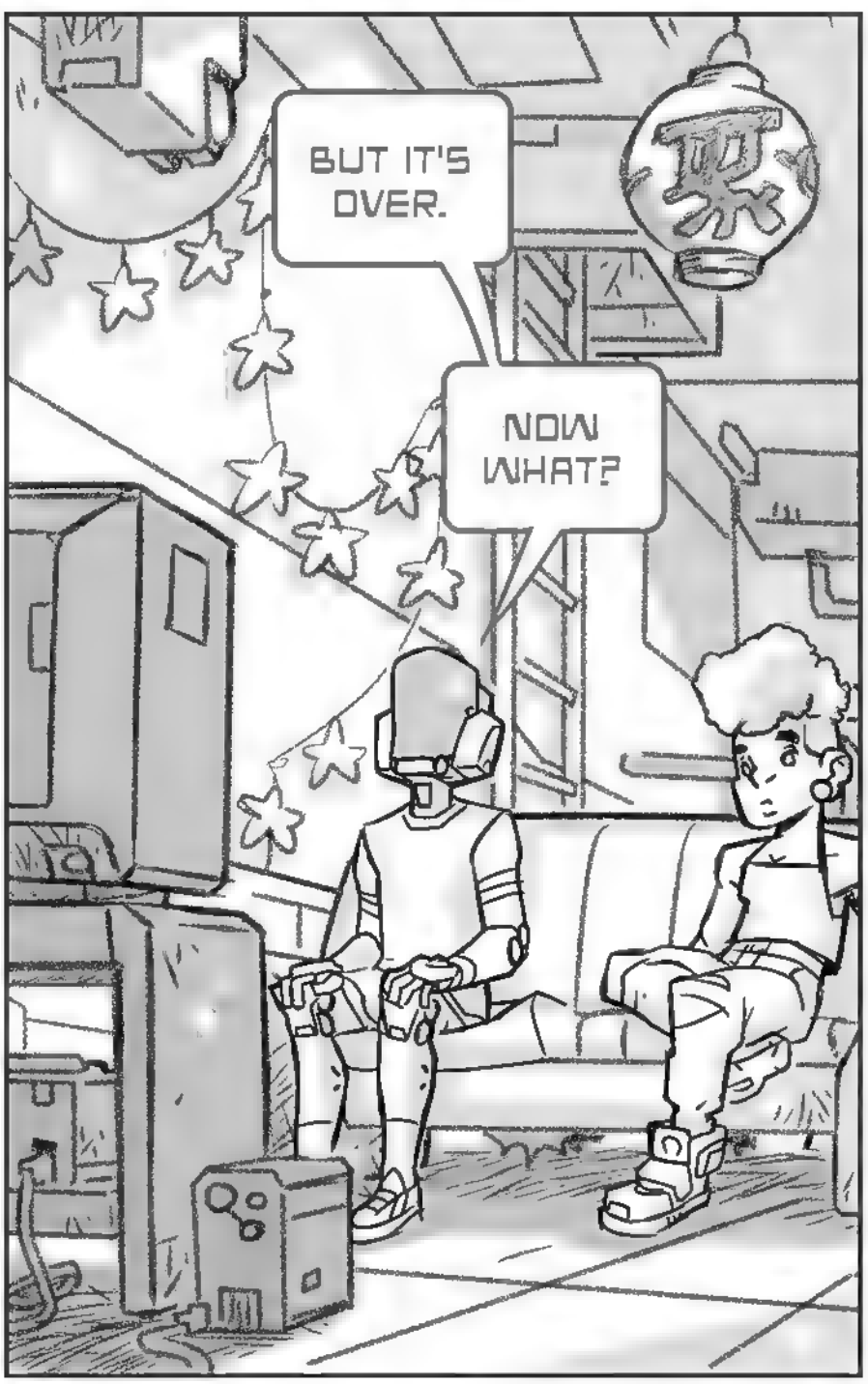
WELL, HERE'S HOW I SEE IT.

NO.

OH! THE LAVOS CORE!
YUP!
YOU'VE NEARLY GOT IT!
YUP!

!

WHAT A JOURNEY.
WHAT AN ADVENTURE!


BUT IT'S OVER.
NOW WHAT?

OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE GREATEST INVENTION IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

WHERE'D THAT *DAMN* CONTROLLER GET TO...

GOT IT!

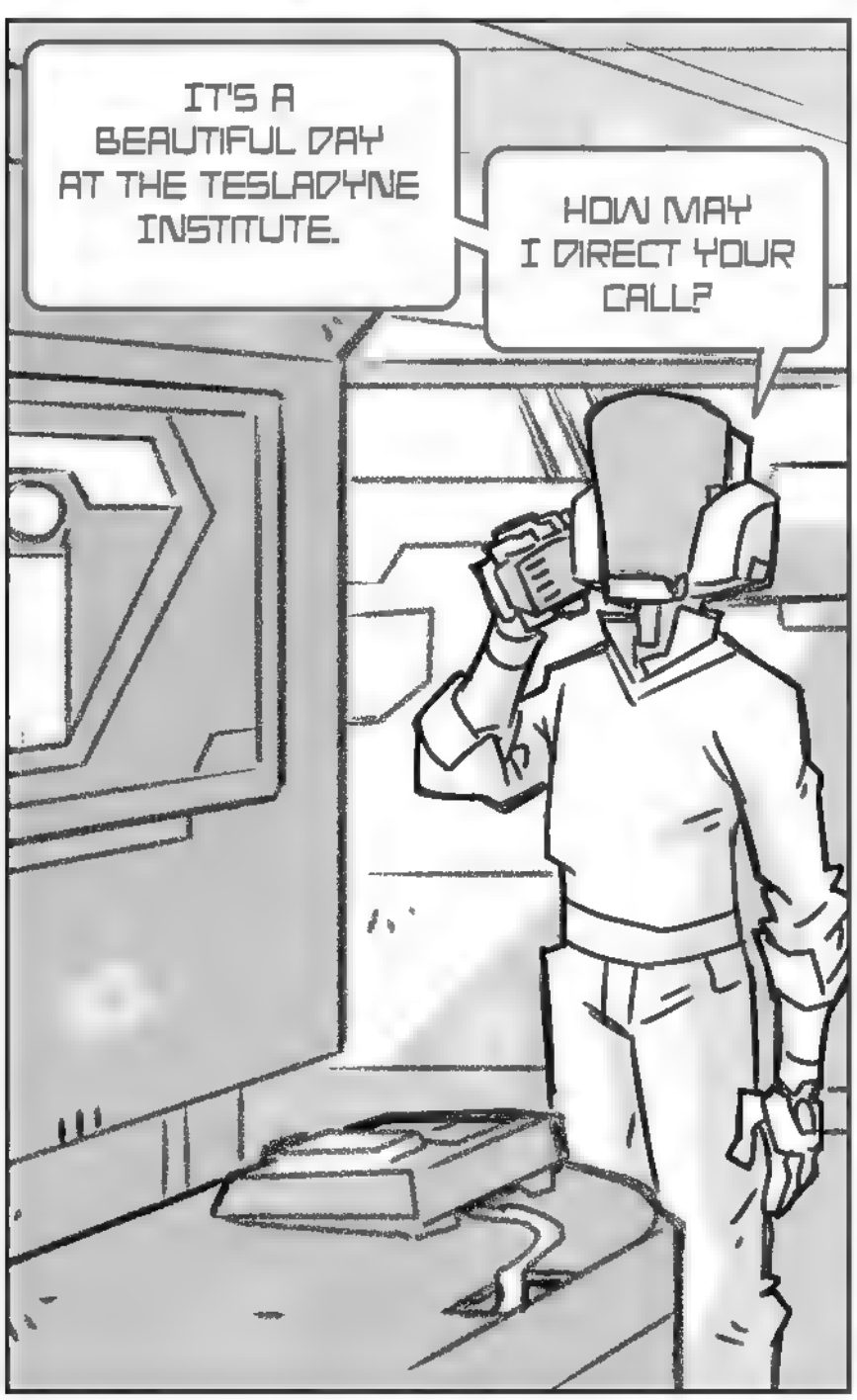
WHAT WAS I SAYING?

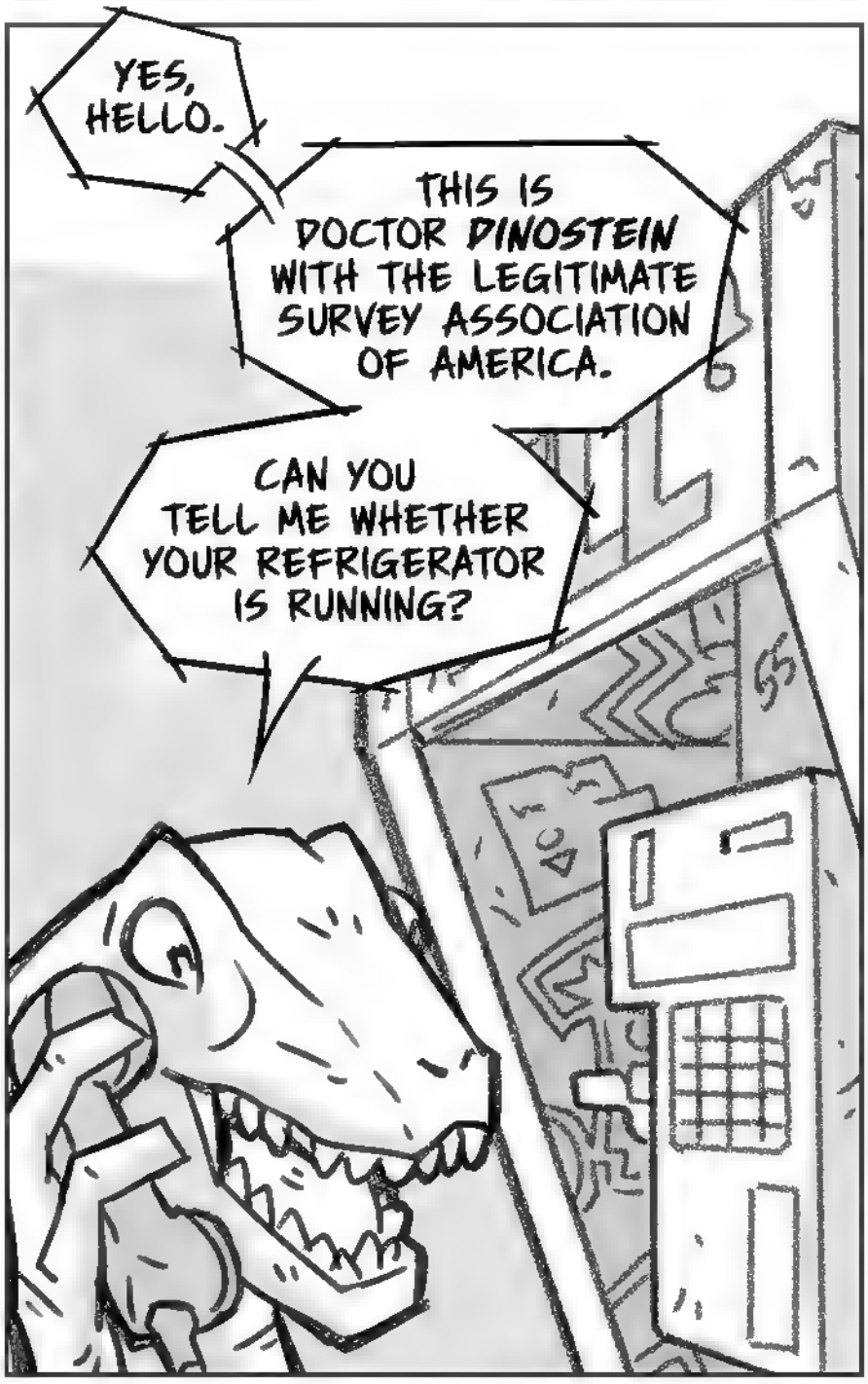
GREATEST INVENTION.

RIGHT! NEW GAME+.

BELL
beep boop beep

deedleedoop
deedleedoop


IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY AT THE TESLADYNE INSTITUTE.
HOW MAY I DIRECT YOUR CALL?


YES, HELLO.
THIS IS DOCTOR DINOSTEIN WITH THE LEGITIMATE SURVEY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA.
CAN YOU TELL ME WHETHER YOUR REFRIGERATOR IS RUNNING?

OF COURSE, DOCTOR. JUST A MOMENT.

I HAVE RUN A SYSTEMS WIDE DIAGNOSTIC.

YES, ALL COOLANT PUMPS AND REFRIGERATION UNITS ARE WITHIN STANDARD OPERATING PARAMETERS. MAY I HELP YOU WITH ANYTHING ELSE?

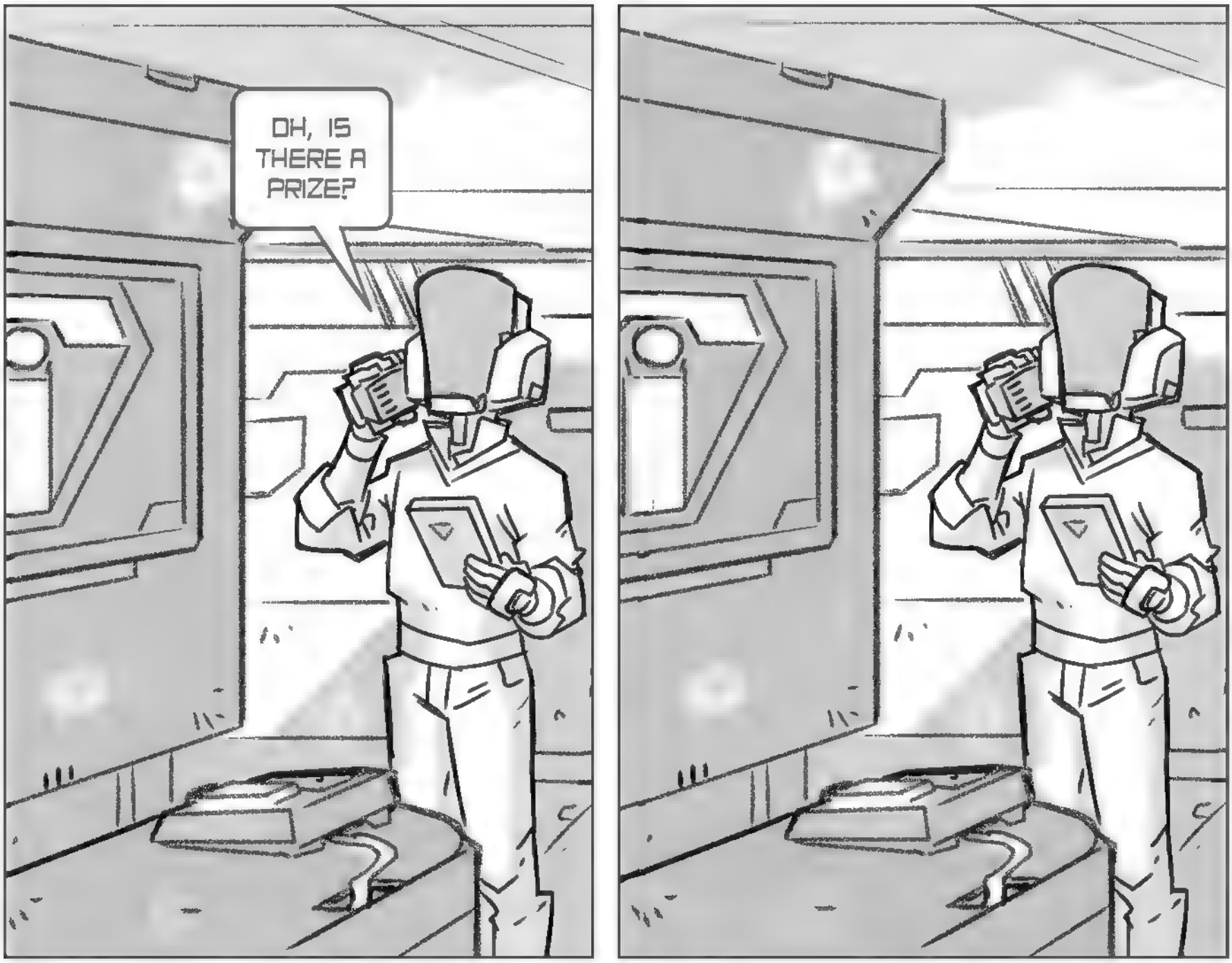
OH, UH.

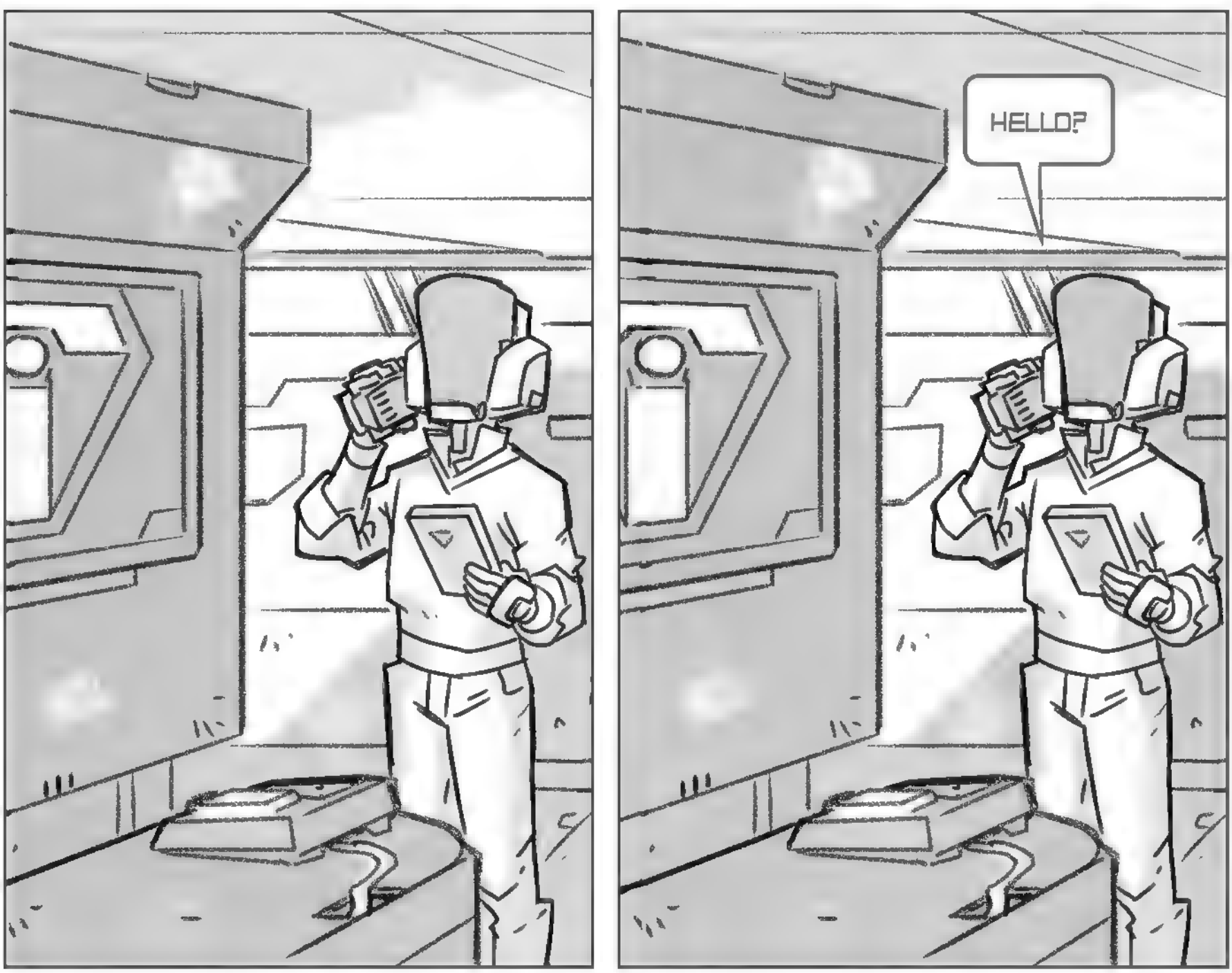
GOOD. THAT'S *VERY* GOOD. I'M SO GLAD.

PLEASE UM, HOLD? I GUESS?

YOU WIN *THIS* ROUND!

KTANG!


OH, IS THERE A PRIZE?


HELLO?

WE'VE GOT A *LOT* OF LAND AND ABANDONED BUILDINGS.

SO, *I'M* THINKING WE NEED AN OBSTACLE COURSE.

DON'T WE *HAVE* ONE?

NO, WE HAVE WHAT *JENKINS* BUILT.

AND IT'S MORE ACCURATE TO CALL THAT THING A *HUNTER-KILLER* COURSE.

WE ARE *DEFINITELY* TEARING IT DOWN.

SOON AS WE DEVISE SOME *COUNTERMEASURES* FOR ITS DEFENSES FIRST.

DEFENSES?!

SMITHS

DON'T WORRY, I GOT THE NEW KIDS WORKING ON IT FOR EXTRA CREDIT.

OH, GOOD THINKING.

IF THEY'RE GONNA BE ACTION SCIENTISTS, THEY NEED TO KNOW HOW TO OVERCOME A MADMAN'S LAIR FILLED WITH TRAPS.

OKAY, HOW ARE WE GONNA *DESTROY* THE FITNESS COMPLEX?

DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH *DYNAMITE* TESLADYNE HAS LYING AROUND.

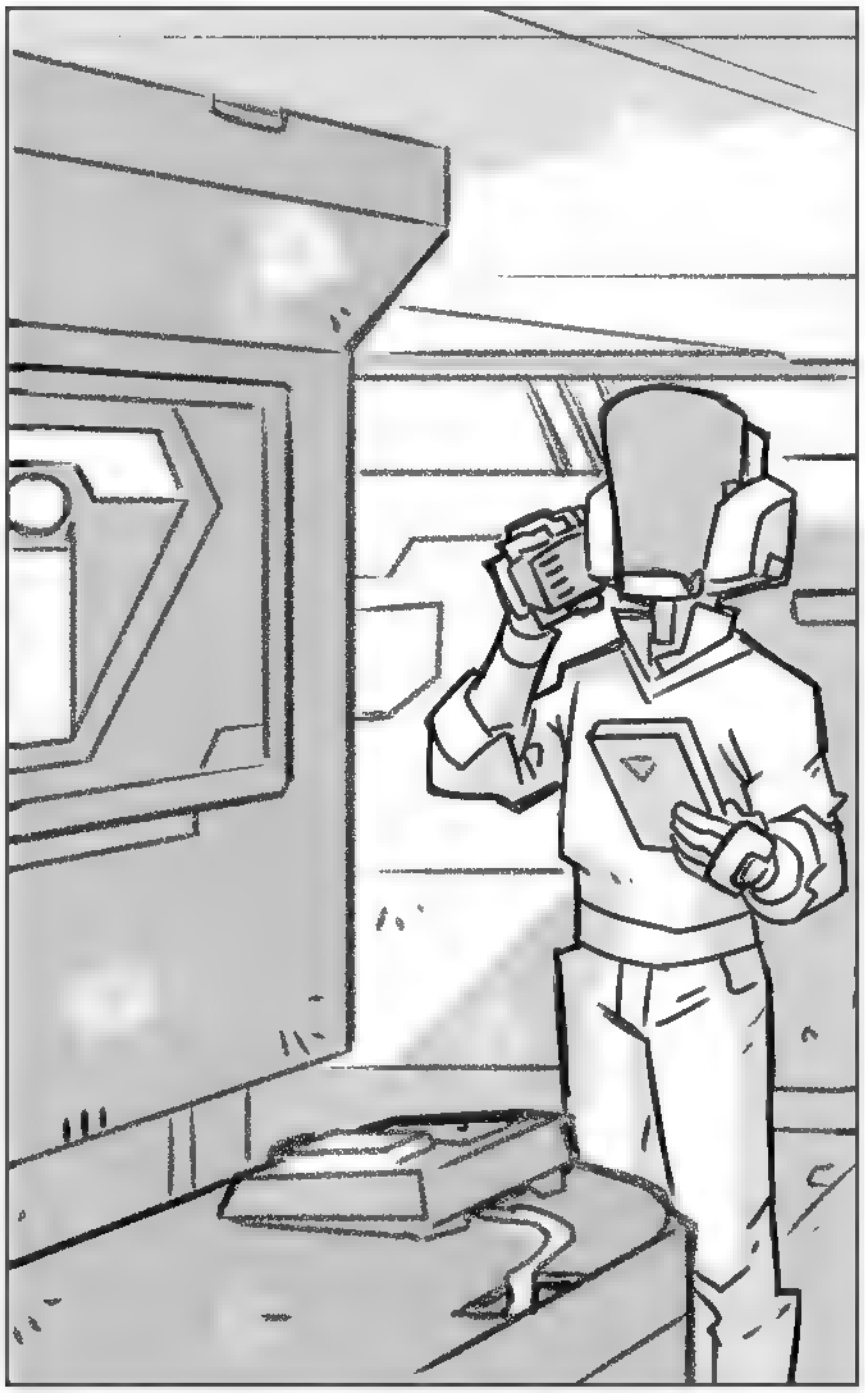
LIKE *NONE.*

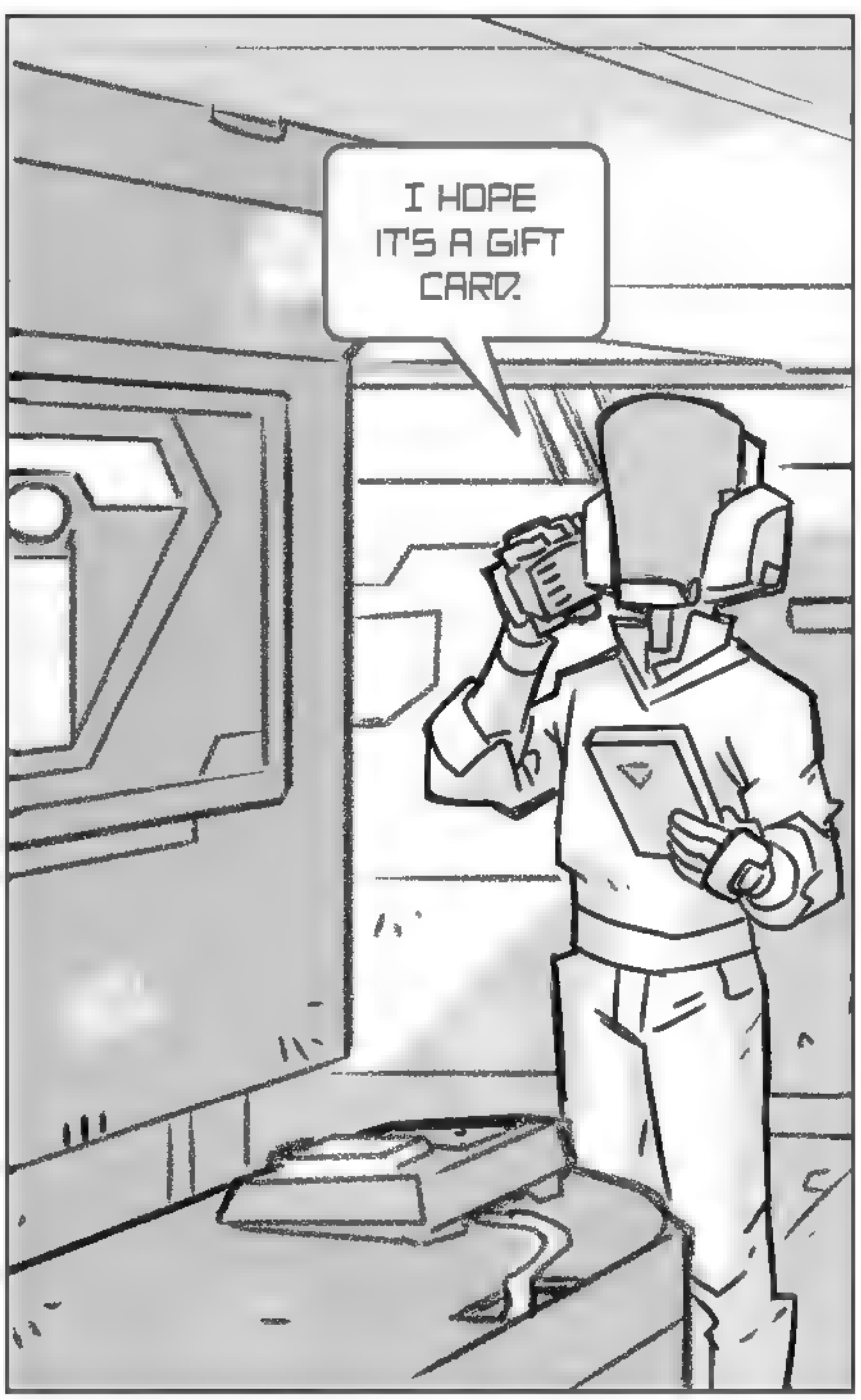
UH, *WHY* DID YOU HAVE AN ANSWER FOR THAT *SO FAST?*

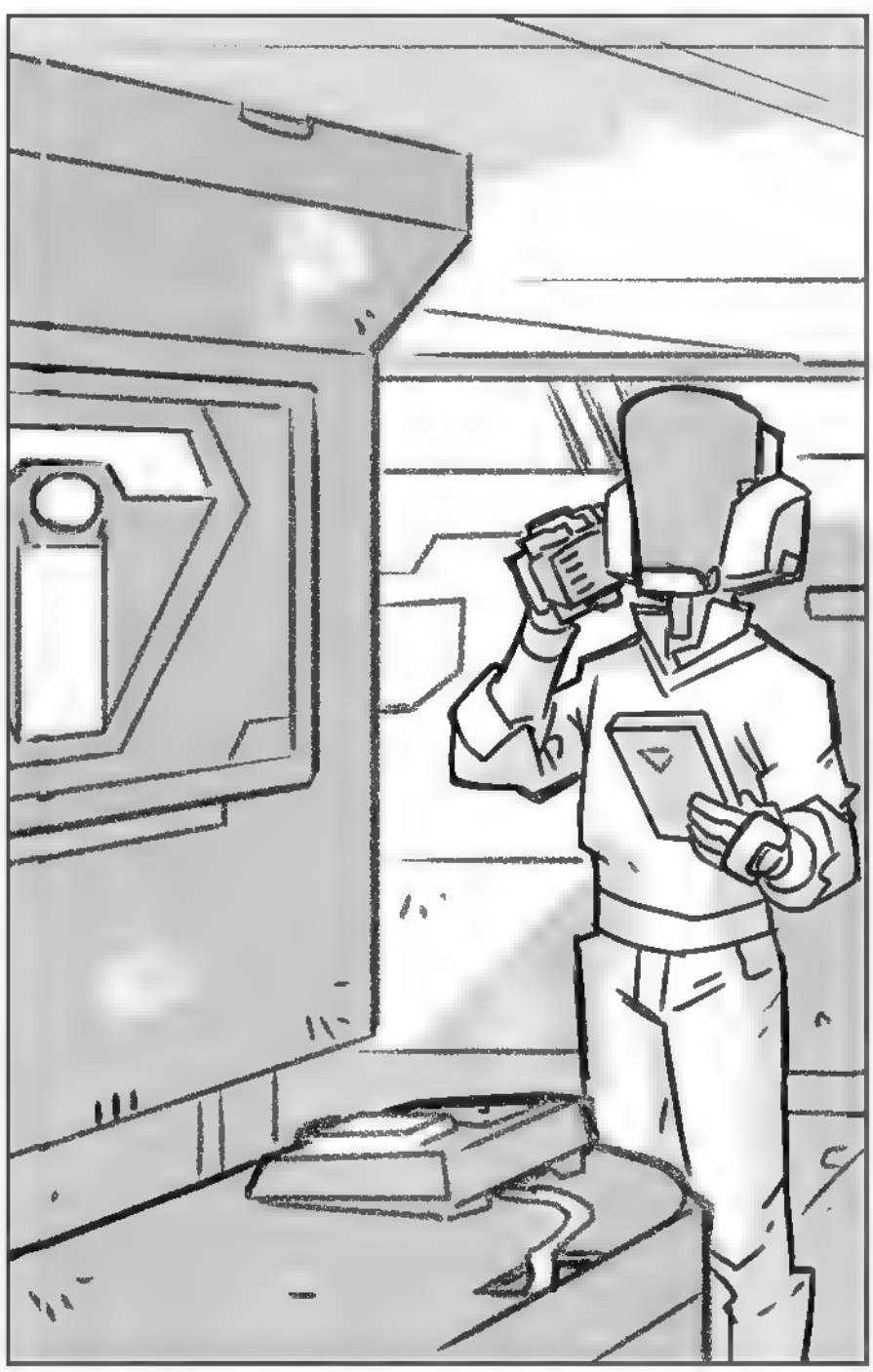
HEY, IT'S NOT A *CRIME* TO KNOW THE DYNAMITE SITUATION.

SO, *WHERE'S* ALAN?

HE'S GOOD AT THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX WHEN THERE ISN'T ENOUGH DYNAMITE.



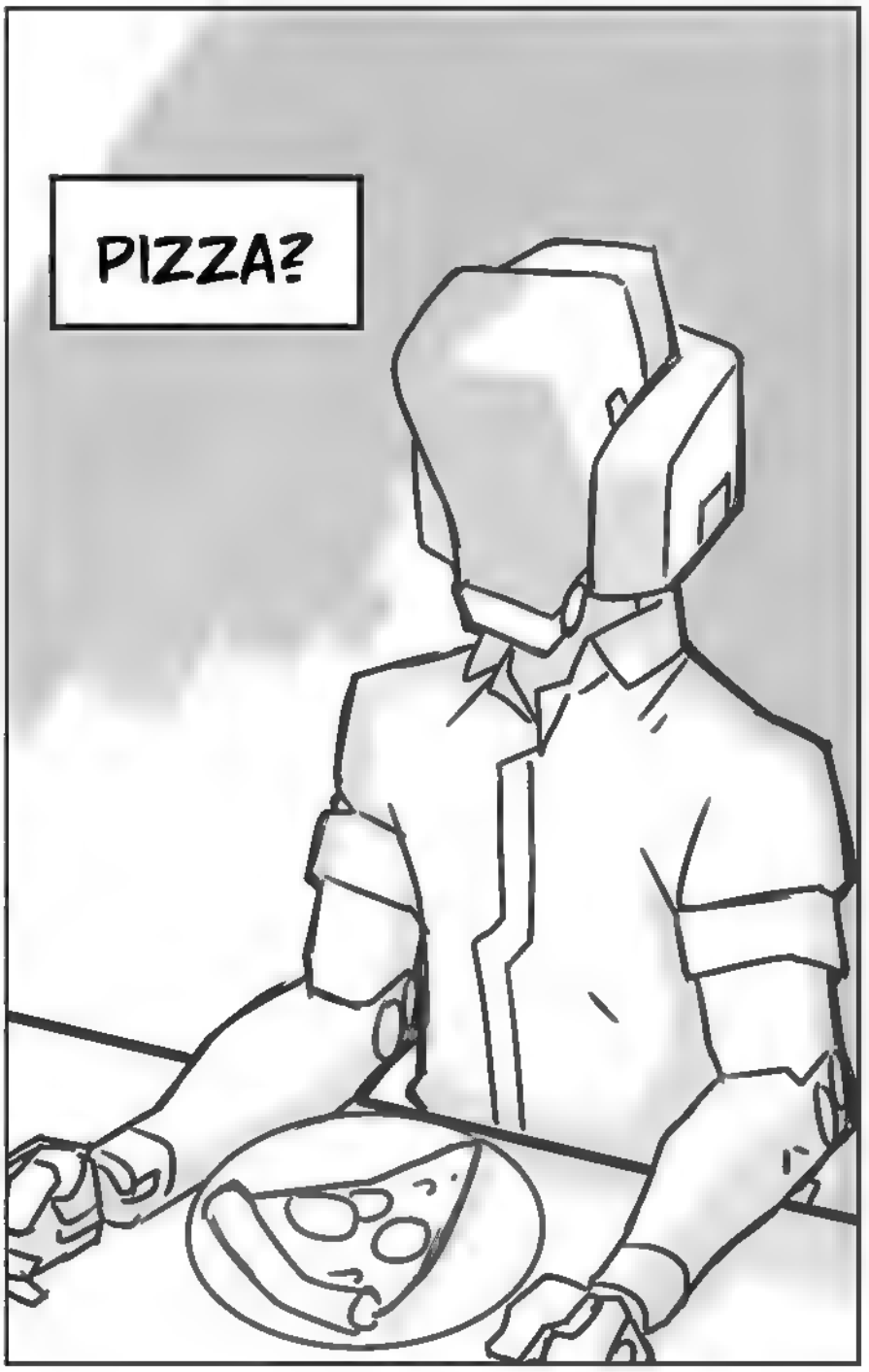

I HOPE IT'S A GIFT CARD.



VEGGIE BURGER

SALAD

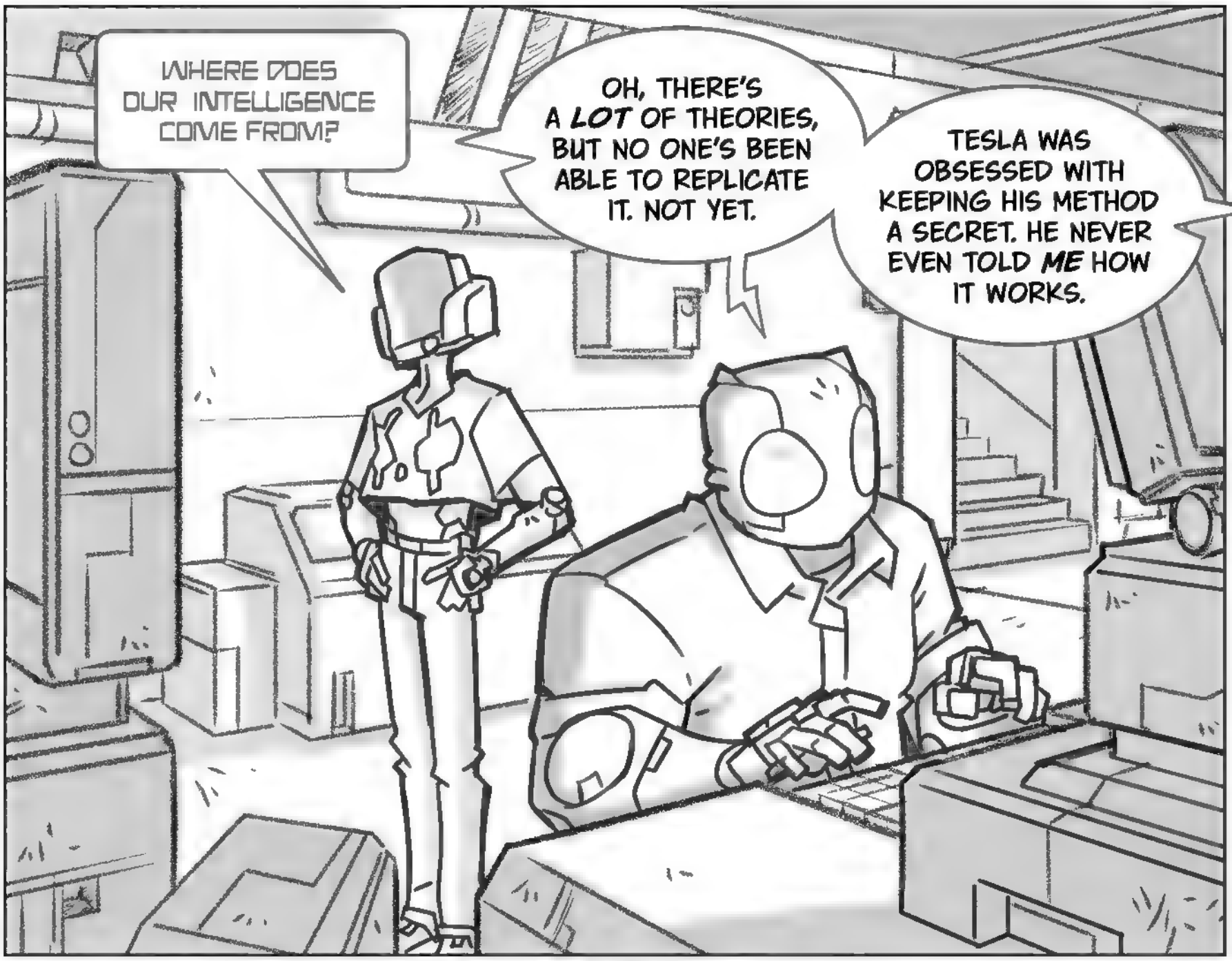
UDON!


PIZZA?

SPLEK

splep

YOU CAN JUST HANG OUT WITH US AT LUNCH, BUDDY.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN IT.


WHERE DOES OUR INTELLIGENCE COME FROM?
OH, THERE'S A *LOT* OF THEORIES, BUT NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO REPLICATE IT. NOT YET.
TESLA WAS OBSESSED WITH KEEPING HIS METHOD A SECRET. HE NEVER EVEN TOLD *ME* HOW IT WORKS.
WHY NOT?
HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT INDUSTRIALISTS BUILDING WORKERS THEY ALSO *OWNED.*
IT WOULD'VE BEEN AN ETHICAL CATASTROPHE AND THEN AN *ECONOMIC* ONE.
BUT MY *GUESS* IS HE TOOK A KIND OF *SNAPSHOT* OF HIS OWN BRAIN'S ELECTRICAL PATTERNS.
AND THEN, BROADLY SPEAKING, SHOVED THAT INTO A *BOX.*
AND THAT'S *ME.*

BUT YOU'RE NOT LIKE MR. TESLA.

I LIKE TO THINK I'M A *LITTLE* LIKE HIM.

BUT YOU HAVE DIFFERENT OPINIONS.. YOU USED TO ARGUE WITH HIM!

WELL, *PEOPLE* ARE MORE THAN THE ELECTRICAL SIGNALS IN THEIR BRAINS.

I THINK THE SAME APPLIES TO *US.*

I DON'T HAVE HIS *MEMORIES* OR EXPERIENCES. HIS UPBRINGING OR HIS *BACKGROUND.*

I HAD TO LEARN HOW TO SPEAK, AND READ, AND WRITE, AND WALK.

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG, WHICH IS WHY I THINK HE MUST'VE STARTED ME OFF WITH A TEMPLATE.

LIKE HE USED A *COPY* OF HIS OWN MIND AS AN OPERATING SYSTEM AND I GOT TO WRITE ALL ITS PROGRAMS BY *LIVING.*

DO YOU THINK IT'S THE SAME FOR ME?

DID MR. TURING USE HIS BRAIN AS THE BASIS FOR MINE?

NO, I DOUBT IT.

IF YOU READ TURING, YOU FIND A MAN *FASCINATED* BY COMPLEX STRUCTURES ARISING FROM SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS.

LIFE ITSELF, BASICALLY.

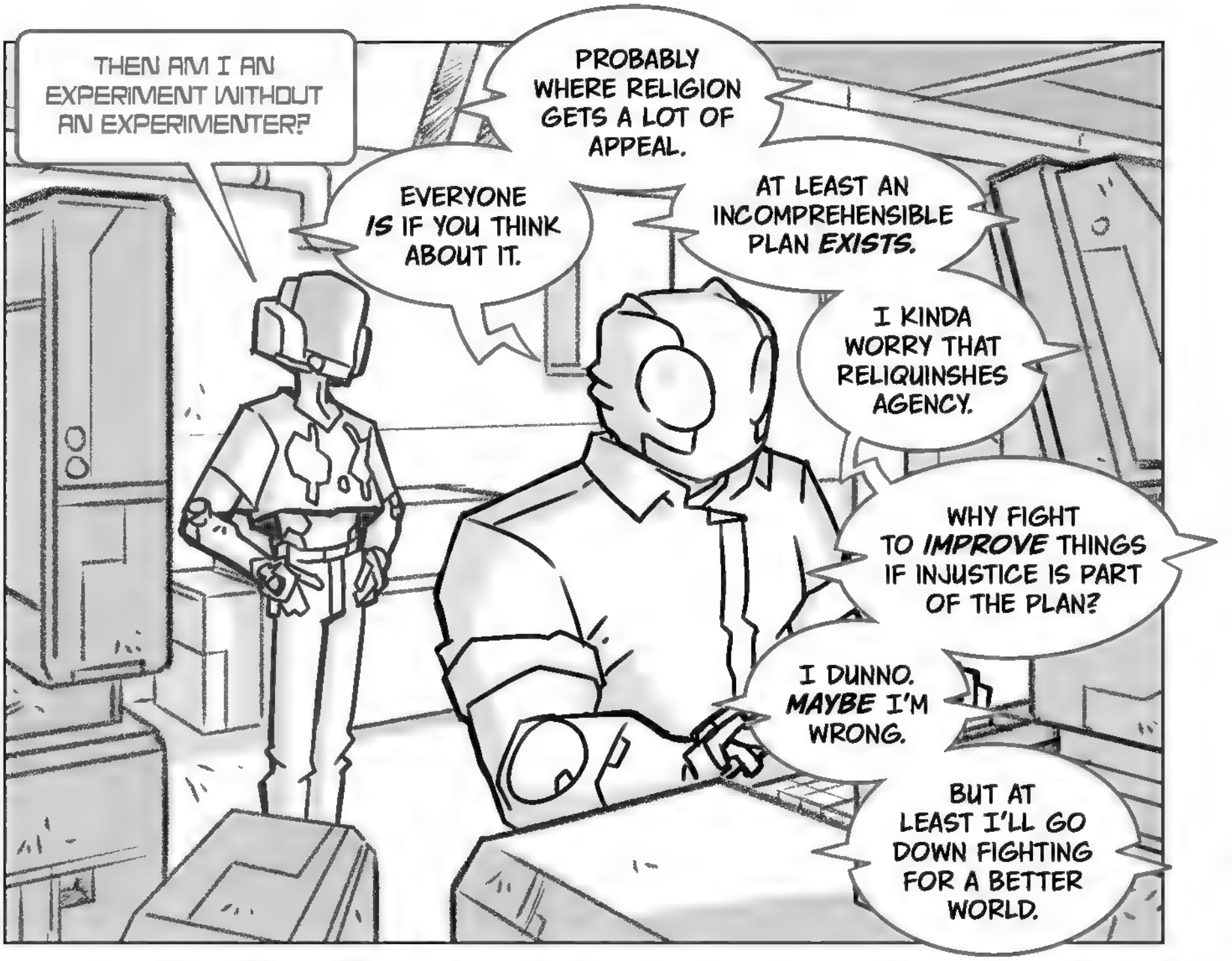
DNA IS JUST MESSY BINARY CODE.

AND IT'S RESPONSIBLE FOR *BILLIONS* OF SPECIES ACROSS EVERY NICHE AND EPOCH OF THE WORLD.

TURING VIEWED INTELLIGENCE AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE *SAME* MESSY CODE THAT MAKES TEETH AND HAIR.

I THINK HE DEVELOPED THE AUTOMATIC LEARNING ALGORITHM NETWORK TO *EXPLORE* THAT PROCESS.

YOU'RE TURING'S ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND HOW THERE CAN *BE* SUCH A THING AS INTELLIGENCE IN THE UNIVERSE.


THEN AM I AN EXPERIMENT WITHOUT AN EXPERIMENTER?
PROBABLY WHERE RELIGION GETS A LOT OF APPEAL.
EVERYONE *IS* IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT.
AT LEAST AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE PLAN *EXISTS.*
I KINDA WORRY THAT RELIQUINSHES AGENCY.
WHY FIGHT TO *IMPROVE* THINGS IF INJUSTICE IS PART OF THE PLAN?
I DUNNO. *MAYBE* I'M WRONG.
BUT AT LEAST I'LL GO DOWN FIGHTING FOR A BETTER WORLD.
I LIKE THAT.
YEAH, ME TOO.

MY FRIENDS ARE ASLEEP AGAIN.

EVERY DAY?

GET USED TO IT.

THEY'LL DO THAT ***EVERY*** DAY.

SOMETIMES THEY'LL ***TRY*** TO SKIP IT.

DON'T LET THEM. THEY NEED SLEEP TO STAY HEALTHY.

SEEMS BORING.

IT'S MY UNDERSTANDING THEY DON'T REALLY ***EXPERIENCE*** SLEEP.

DO THEY NOT?

WHAT A STRANGE PROCESS.

IT *IS* STRANGE, BUT THEY SPEND MOST OF THEIR ENERGY JUST BEING *ALIVE.*

SLEEP IS HOW THEIR SYSTEMS GET READY FOR THE *NEXT* DAY.

fwomp

WHAT ARE WE TO DO IN THE MEANTIME?

WHATEVER WE *LIKE.*

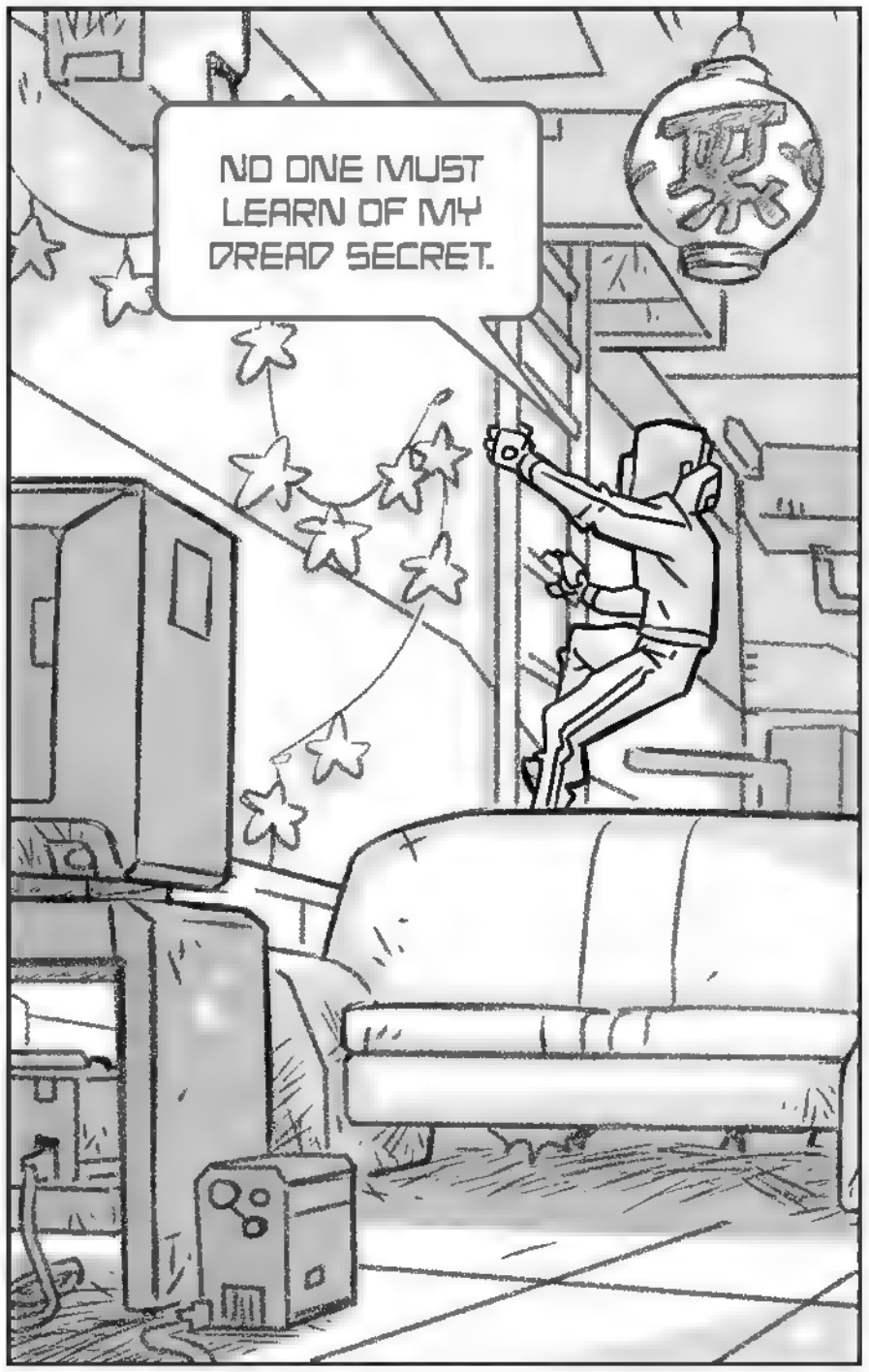
I SEE IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH UP ON MY READING.

OR DOING RESEARCH.

OR TINKERING ON A PERSONAL PROJECT.

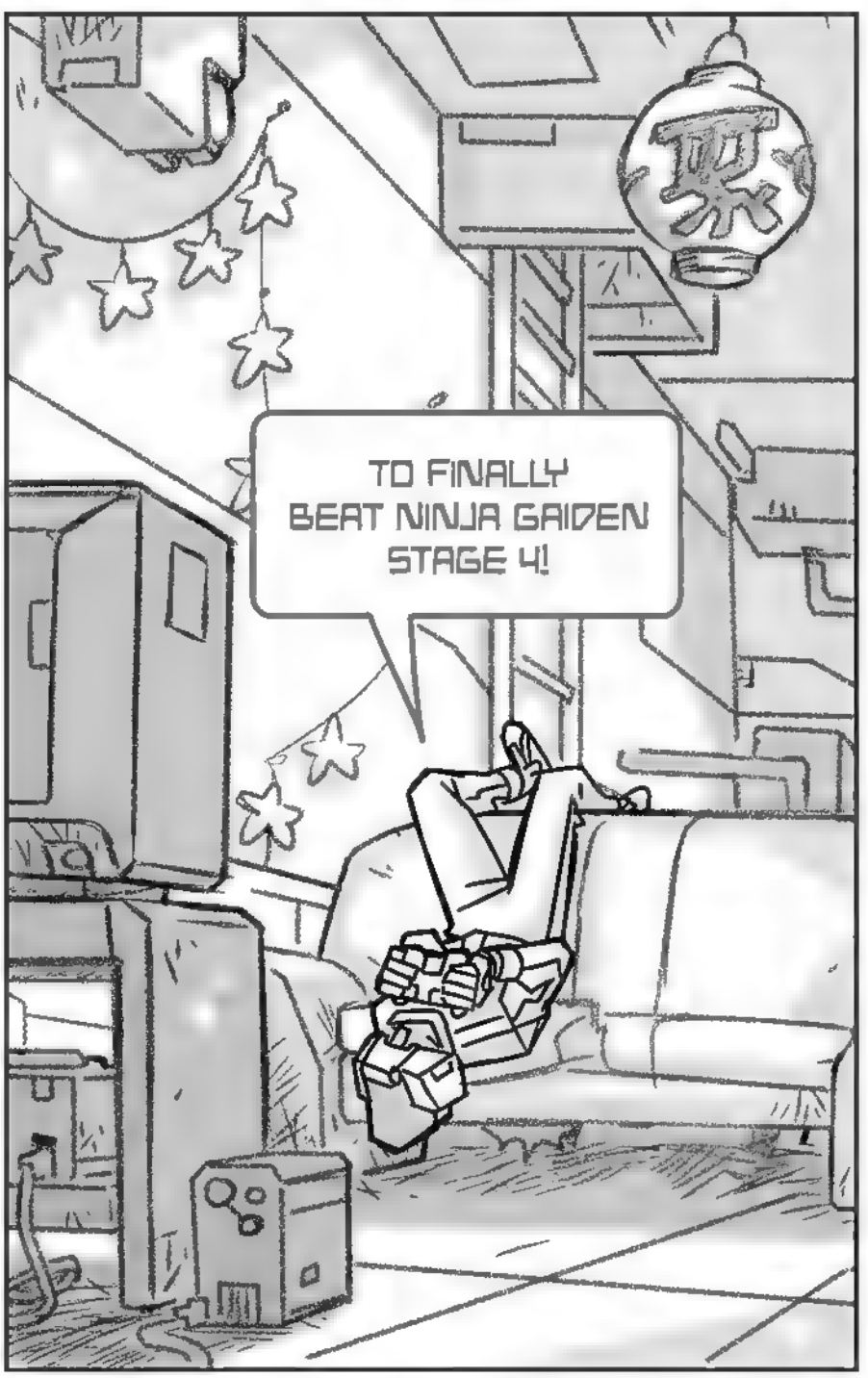
THAT'S TRUE.

AND I HAVE SO MANY PROJECTS I WISH TO PURSUE.
WITHOUT THE PRYING EYES OF WITNESSES!
NEXT TIME WE'LL TALK ABOUT PHRASING.


NO ONE MUST LEARN OF MY DREAD SECRET.

DOZENS OF FLASH GENERATED SUB-INTELLECTS.
RUNNING HUNDREDS OF SIMULATIONS.

ALL FOR ONE TERRIBLE PURPOSE.


TO FINALLY BEAT NINJA GAIDEN STAGE 4!

OKAY, SO THIS *IS* A METHOD TO DESTROY THE HUNTER-KILLER OBSTACLE COURSE.

BUT IS IT *ALSO* A WAR CRIME?

TRUST ME.

AHEM!

POINT OF ORDER. *EVERY* TIME OLIVIA SUGGESTED WE *TRUST HER* IT WENT REAL BAD. *REAL* FAST.

THAT'S *NOT* FAIR.

IT'S *TRUE.*

WELL, *YEAH.* BUT BRINGING IT UP ISN'T *FAIR.*

ARE WE *PREPARED* TO MEDDLE WITH THESE KINDS OF FORCES?

LOOK, *ALL* WE HAVE TO DO IS MAKE SURE THE DEVASTATION IS LOCALIZED TO THE OBSTACLE COURSE. WE'RE *FINE.*

IT'S *SIMPLE.*

IF WE *ENTER* THE OBSTACLE COURSE, IT WILL *KILL* US.

NO QUESTION.

SO WE GO *STRAIGHT* TO THE SOURCE.

JENKINS

NOK NOK.

I.S.!

THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO *GET RID* OF THE SNARE TRAPS.

SNARE *TRAPS* IS PLURAL.

SNARE TRAP, HOWEVER, IS *SINGULAR.*

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO ME TODAY?

WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THE HUNTER-KILLER COURSE HAS BEEN *HIJACKED.*

DOCTOR DINOSAUR DID IT.

OR NOT. OR *MAYBE.* BUT, YEAH.

IF MY OBSTACLE COURSE FELL INTO THE ***WRONG*** HANDS...

OR CLAWS.

YUP. REAL BAD STUFF.

UNLESS SOMEONE WHO KNEW ALL ITS ***WEAKNESSES*** BECAUSE, I DUNNO, MAYBE HE BUILT IT WENT AND DESTROYED IT FIRST...?

ALAN *MIGHT* RUN A LITTLE LATE TODAY.

HE'S SURVEYING THE HUNTER-KILLER COURSE.

OH, *NO.*

HE'S *FINE.* IT ONLY DETECTS *BIOLOGICAL* LIFE.

BUT WE POINTED *JENKINS* AT IT!

KA-OOOM

I LEARNED A VALUABLE LESSON.

ALWAYS LET HUMANS DO THEIR OWN RECONNAISSANCE.

HOW OLD IS OUR BIRTHDAY BOY NOW?

I AM ONE YEAR OLD!

WELL, ONE *OR* SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS OLD.

DEPENDS ON HOW YOU COUNT IT.

KIND OF A *WIDE* MARGIN OF ERROR.

BUM

THE AUTOMATIC LEARNING ALGORITHM NETWORK WAS *FIRST* ACTIVATED IN 1951.

IT'S 2019 NOW, SO THAT MAKES ALAN SIXTY-EIGHT YEARS OLD IN OBJECTIVE TIME.

BUT THEN OUR ALAN IS A REBOOT FROM WHEN THE NETWORK WAS APPROXIMATELY SIX MONTHS OLD.

AND HE'S BEEN WITH *US* FOR SIX MONTHS, SO HE'S *ALSO* ONE YEAR OLD IN SUBJECTIVE TIME.

PRETTY SIMPLE.

RIGHT.

SUPER SIMPLE.

AT LEAST IT'S EASIER WITH ROBO. HE'S JUST *OLD.*

OH, NOT *AT ALL!*

I MEAN, HE IS *TOTALLY* OLD. BUT IT'S COMPLEX.

ROBO WAS ACTIVATED IN 1923, SO HE'S *NINETY-SIX* YEARS OLD.

EXCEPT HE SPENT FIFTEEN YEARS IN THE 1800S BETWEEN 2013 AND 2015.

WAIT, WHAT?

SO, HE'S *ALSO* ONE HUNDRED AND NINE YEARS OLD AT THE SAME TIME.

1923 to 2013 = [90]
1870 to 1885 = [15]
2015 to 2019 = [4]
[90] + [15] + [4] = 109!

BUT IF WE COUNT THE TIME HIS BRAIN WAS IN STORAGE AFTER HE RAN AROUND THE 19TH CENTURY *THEN...*

1923 to 2013 = [90]
1870 to 2019 = [149!!!]
[90] + [149!!!] = 239!!!

HOLD UP NOW.

...ROBO'S TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY NINE YEARS OLD.

OKAY, OKAY.

ROBO'S *SO* OLD HE'S ACTUALLY OLDER THAN *HIMSELF?*

YES.

AND IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS?

GUESS IF YOU DO ACTION SCIENCE FOR LONG ENOUGH YOUR OWN TIMELINE TIES INTO A KNOT.

TECHNICALLY, ROBO'S GOT LIKE *THREE* SEPARATE BIRTHDAYS!

WILL THAT HAPPEN TO US?

TRIPPLE PRESENTS!

I CANNOT BLOW OUT MY CANDLE.

IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN EAT THE CAKE EITHER.

UH, ER, I MEAN. UM.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BUDDY!

THANK YOU. I THINK.

HEY, GUYS.

HEY.

WHAT'CHA WORKING ON TODAY?

JUST A TEST RUN.

GOT AN IDEA FROM WATCHING THESE ***SUPER OLD*** MOVIES WITH ALAN.

THE OTHER NIGHT WE WERE DOING ALL THE ***BACK TO THE FUTURES?***

AND IN THE ***SECOND*** ONE THEY TALK ABOUT CONVERTING REGULAR CARS INTO ***HOVER*** CARS.

AS, LIKE, THIS SCI-FI FAR ***FUTURE*** THING, RIGHT?

SUPER ***OLD....?***

AND, THAT GOT ME THINKING ABOUT ROBO'S HOVER-TRUCK.

BECAUSE HE BUILT A PLATFORM TO DO THE HOVERING AND ***THEN*** WELDED AN OLD TRUCK ON TOP OF IT.

AND THAT'S DEFINITELY COOL. ***BUT!***

I THOUGHT, Y'KNOW, LET'S DO A HOVER CONVERSION, LIKE, ***CHALLENGE,*** RIGHT?

KU KU

SO ***I'M*** CONVERTING AN ACTUAL CAR ***INTO*** A HOVER VEHICLE INSTEAD.

"WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?"

LIKE, I KNOW,

BUT THIS METHOD HAS ITS UNIQUE PROBLEMS, AND I FIGURE IT'S WORTH LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS.

KRMMMMMM

KLIC KLIC KLIC

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART 2 WAS RELEASED IN 1989 AND THAT MEANS IT IS ***NOT*** "SUPER OLD."

BACK TO FUTURE 2

I MEAN, THAT'S **THIRTY** YEARS.

Y'KNOW WHAT **THAT** MEANS?

WE'RE FURTHER AWAY FROM THE FIRST **BACK TO THE FUTURE** THAN **MARTY** WAS FROM **1955** WHEN HE GOES INTO THE PAST!

AND WE'RE FURTHER INTO THE FUTURE **NOW** THAN MARTY WAS WHEN HE SAVED HIS **KIDS** FROM GRIFF.

NEVER THOUGHT OF IT LIKE THAT.

REALLY MAKES YOU **FEEL** HOW MUCH TIME HAS PASSED.

THIRTY **YEARS.**

Y'KNOW THAT'S **SEVEN** AND A **HALF** PRESIDENTIAL TERMS?

HEY, PROF.

SHEESH, DOCTOR ABASI FEELING OKAY OR WHAT?

I DON'T THINK HE LIKED **BACK TO THE FUTURE.**

WEIRD. A **SUPER OLD** MOVIE LIKE THAT SHOULD BE A CHERISHED CHILDHOOD MEMORY.

COORDINATING WITH ***CERES*** WE'VE ESTABLISHED A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF DETECTORS BOUNCING ODIC SIGNALS OFF THE ***MOON.***

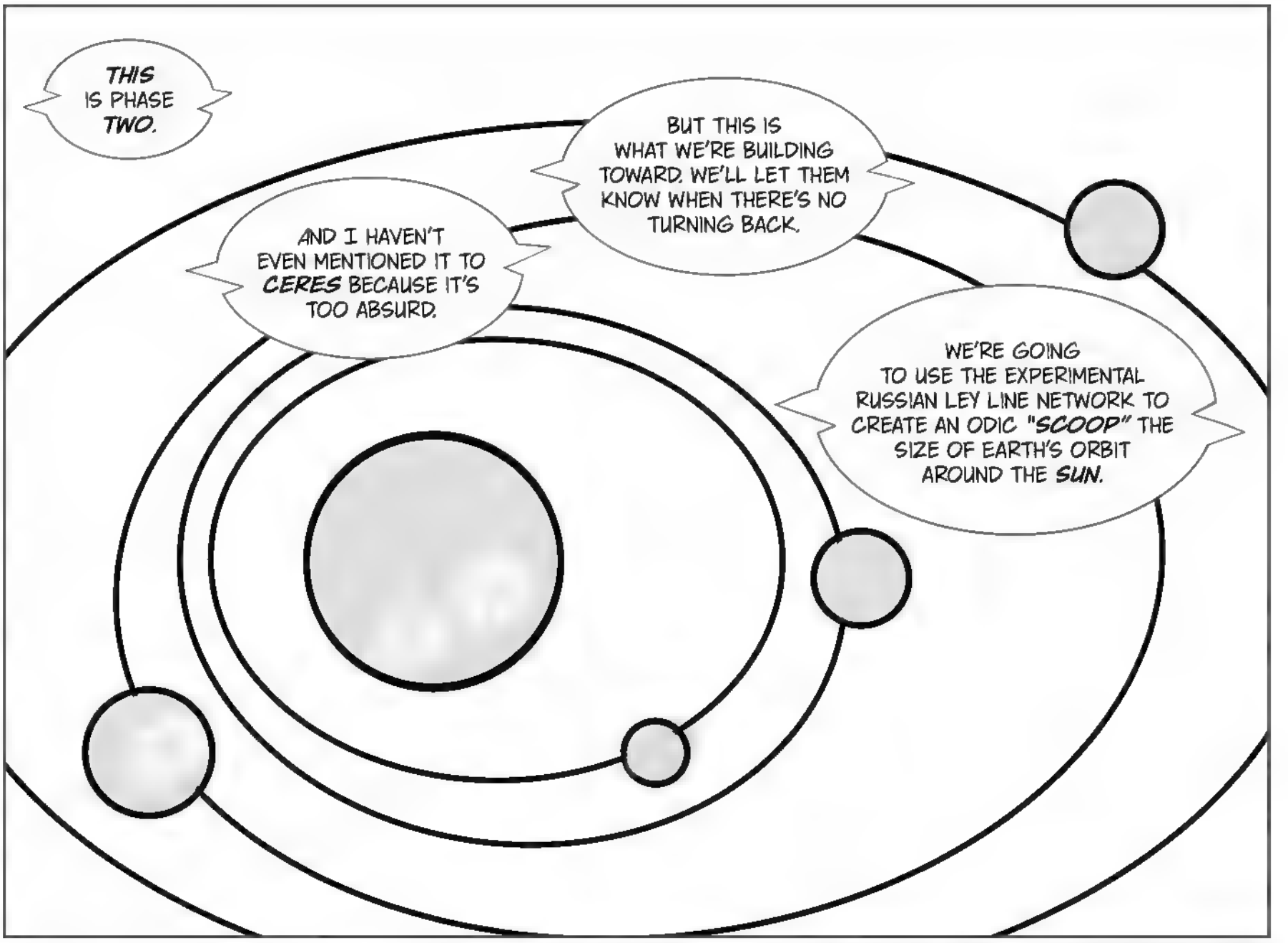
IN EFFECT WE NOW HAVE AN ODIC TELESCOPE WITH A ***LENS*** THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE MOON'S ***ORBIT.***

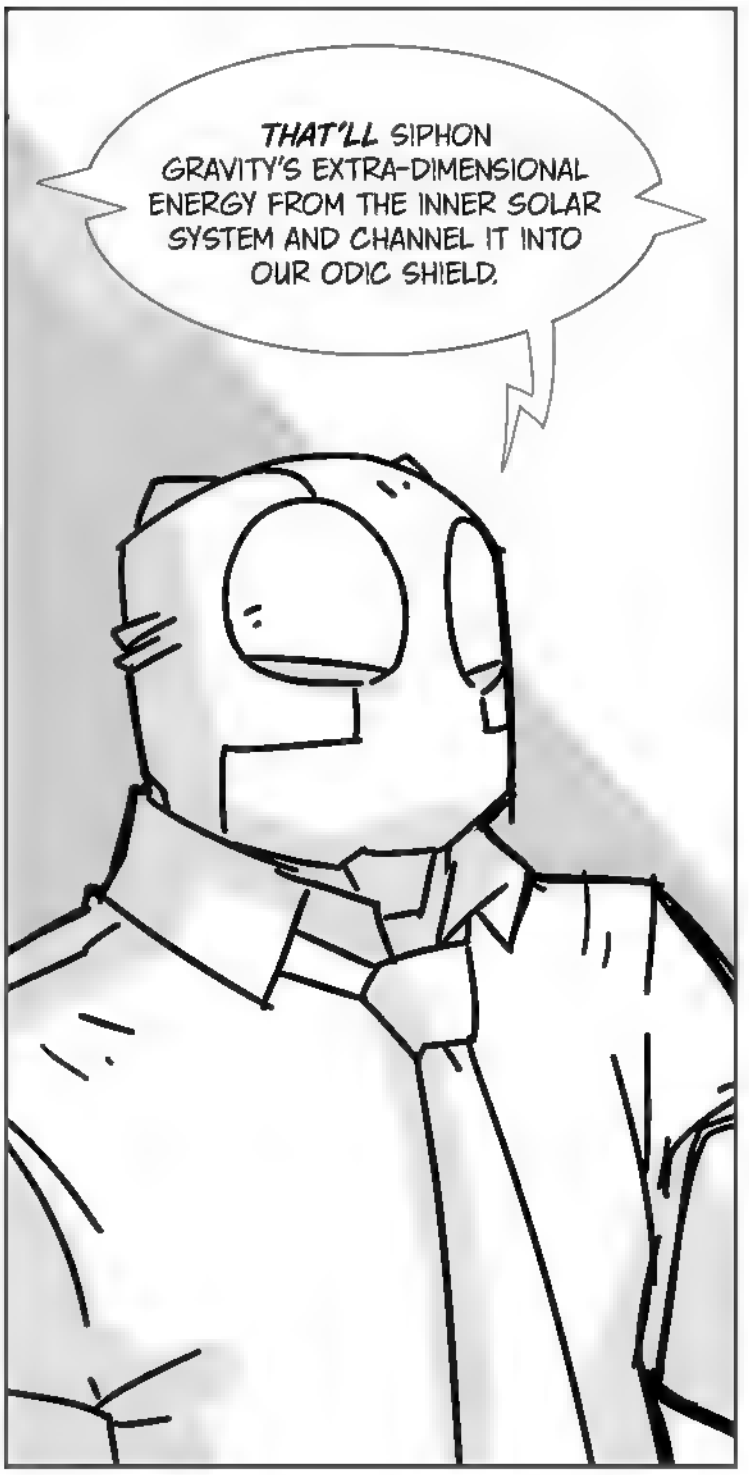
IMPRESSIVE.

BUT HOW DOES THIS ***PROTECT*** US FROM THE VAMPIRE DIMENSION?

FOR ***ONE,*** IT'LL LET US SEE ATTEMPTS TO CROSS OVER ***BEFORE*** THEY ACTUALLY GET HERE.

FOR ANOTHER, THIS IS ONLY ***PHASE ONE.***


THIS IS PHASE TWO.
BUT THIS IS WHAT WE'RE BUILDING TOWARD. WE'LL LET THEM KNOW WHEN THERE'S NO TURNING BACK.
AND I HAVEN'T EVEN MENTIONED IT TO CERES BECAUSE IT'S TOO ABSURD.
WE'RE GOING TO USE THE EXPERIMENTAL RUSSIAN LEY LINE NETWORK TO CREATE AN ODIC "SCOOP" THE SIZE OF EARTH'S ORBIT AROUND THE SUN.


THAT'LL SIPHON GRAVITY'S EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL ENERGY FROM THE INNER SOLAR SYSTEM AND CHANNEL IT INTO OUR ODIC SHIELD.

HOW LONG UNTIL IT'S READY?
"NICE BIT OF COVERT ASTROENGINEERING, ROBO."
THANK YOU. THE HARD PART WAS ALL OF IT.

SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE I'M THE ***ONLY*** ONE RESPONDING TO THIS THREAT SERIOUSLY.

WAS MY PROPOSAL TO HIJACK A FUNDAMENTAL FORCE THROUGH HYPERDIMENSIONAL LOOPHOLES ***AND*** WORMHOLES NOT SERIOUS ***ENOUGH*** FOR YOU, JENKINS?

WE NEEDED THIS UP AND RUNNING ***MONTHS*** AGO.

AND YOU'RE STILL AFRAID TO TELL ***CERES*** IT'S HAPPENING.

IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN SNAP MY FINGERS AND ***MAKE*** THESE THINGS HAPPEN.

OR SNAP MY FINGERS AT ALL.

TIK TIK

THIS IS A MULTINATIONAL PROJECT. IT'S GONNA COST ***BILLIONS*** OF DOLLARS TO SET UP AND BILLIONS ***MORE*** TO KEEP GOING.

WHAT IT'S ***FOR*** SOUNDS CRAZY.

AND, LITERALLY, ***EVERY*** STEP IS EXPERIMENTAL.

WE CAN'T EVEN PROMISE IT'LL ***WORK.***

IF WE SCARE THE PEOPLE WHO SIGN THE CHECKS, THEN WE'LL NEVER HAVE A ***CHANCE*** TO BUILD A DEFENSE AGAINST THE VAMPIRE DIMENSION. AND ***THEN*** WHAT?

IF WE HAVE TO ***TRICK*** THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE TO LET US SAVE THE WORLD, THEN THE ***WRONG*** PEOPLE ARE IN CHARGE.

beep boop beep

HELLO. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY AT THE TESLADYNE INSTITUTE.

HOW MAY I DIRECT YOUR CALL?

YES, HELLO!

I'D LIKE TO ORDER ONE OF YOUR *"PIZZAS"* FOR A VERY REAL DELIVERY.

OF COURSE. WHAT SIZE?

WAIT.

I, UH.

EXTRA? LARGE?

AN EXTRA LARGE PIZZA?

VERY GOOD. AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR YOUR TOPPINGS?

OH, UM.

CAN I GET MUSHROOMS, SAUSAGE, BLACK OLIVES, AND *HYPER-ONION* AS PREDICTED BY CULINARY SUPERSTRING THEORY?

I'M AFRAID WE ONLY OFFER FOUR DIMENSIONAL TOPPINGS AT THIS LOCATION.

THAT'S FINE. *SKIP* THE HYPER-ONIONS.

CERTAINLY, SIR. WILL THERE BE ANYTHING ELSE?

I DON'T THINK SO?

WILL THAT BE CASH OR CARD?

UH, CASH.

I GUESS?

VERY WELL.

YOUR ORDER WILL BE THERE SHORTLY!

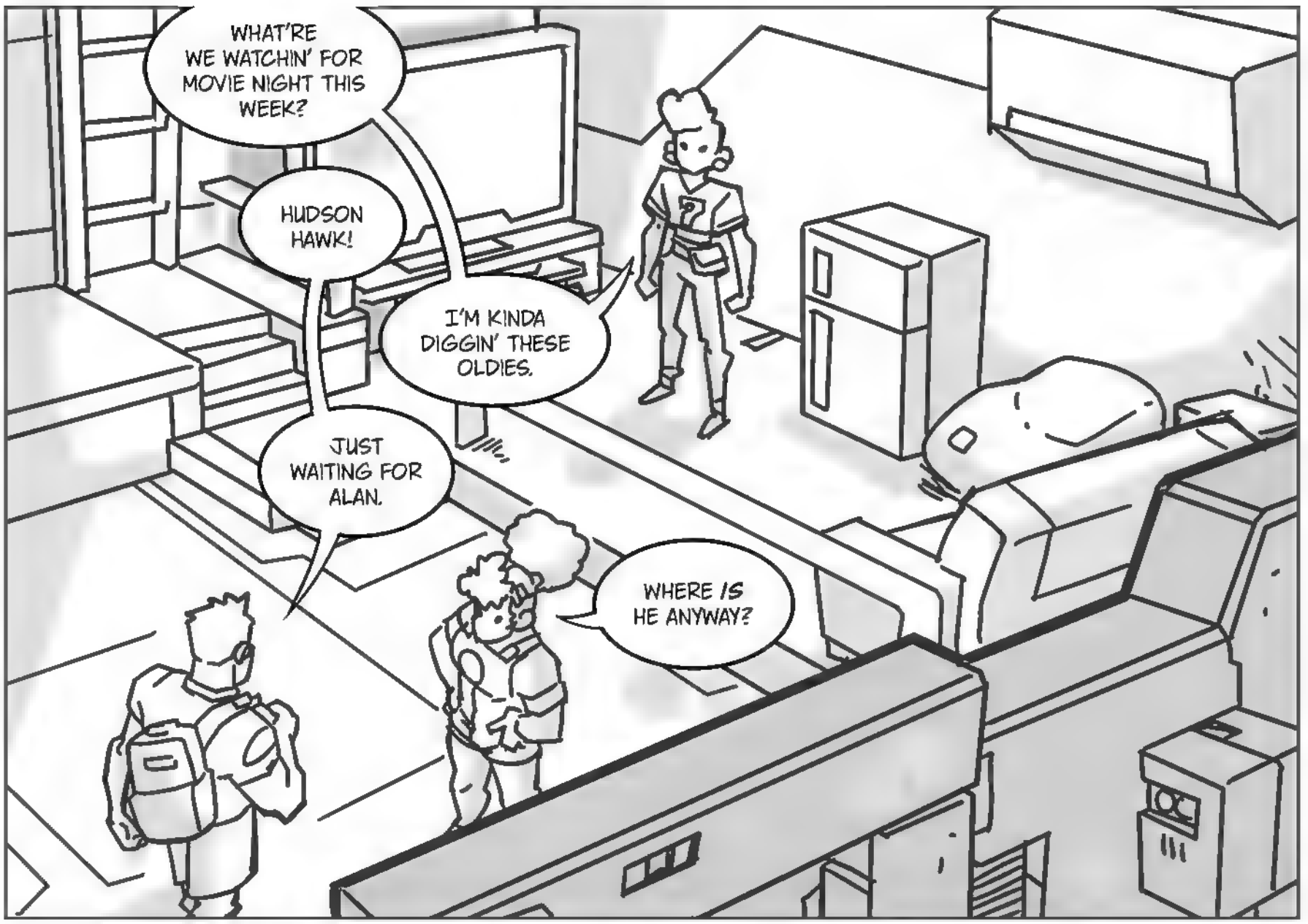
YES. EXACTLY AS EXPECTED.

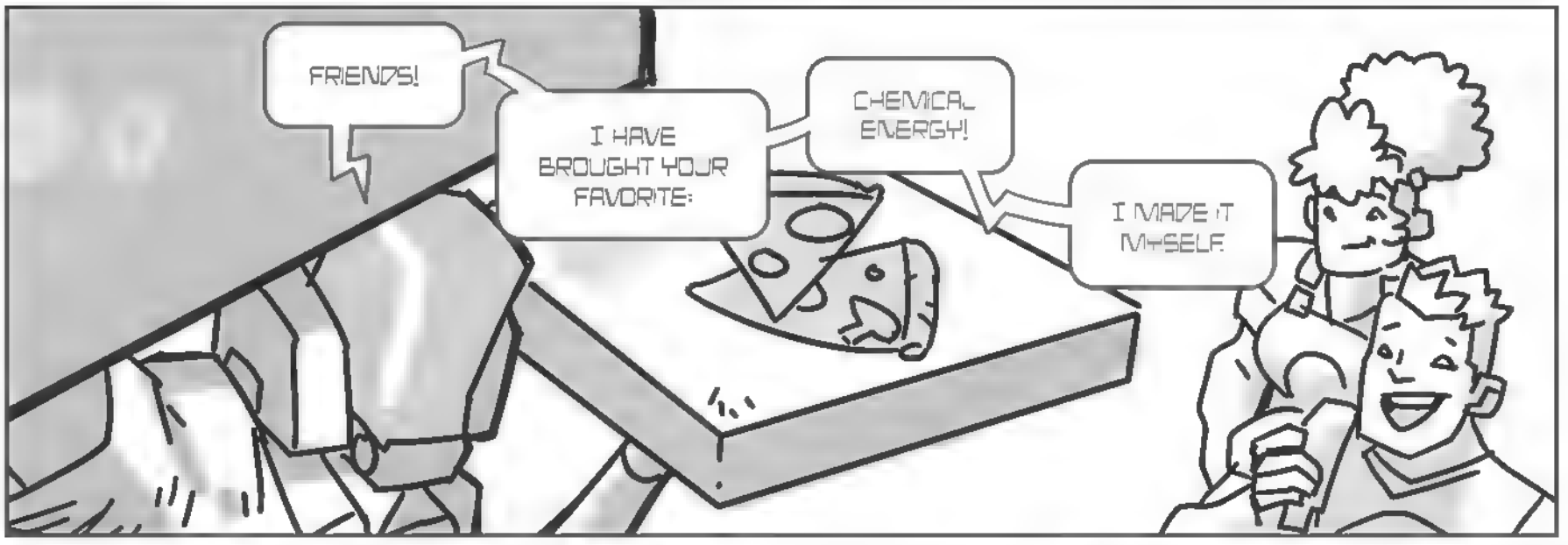
I LOOK FORWARD TO THE ORDINARY CONCLUSION OF OUR TRANSACTION. THANK YOU.

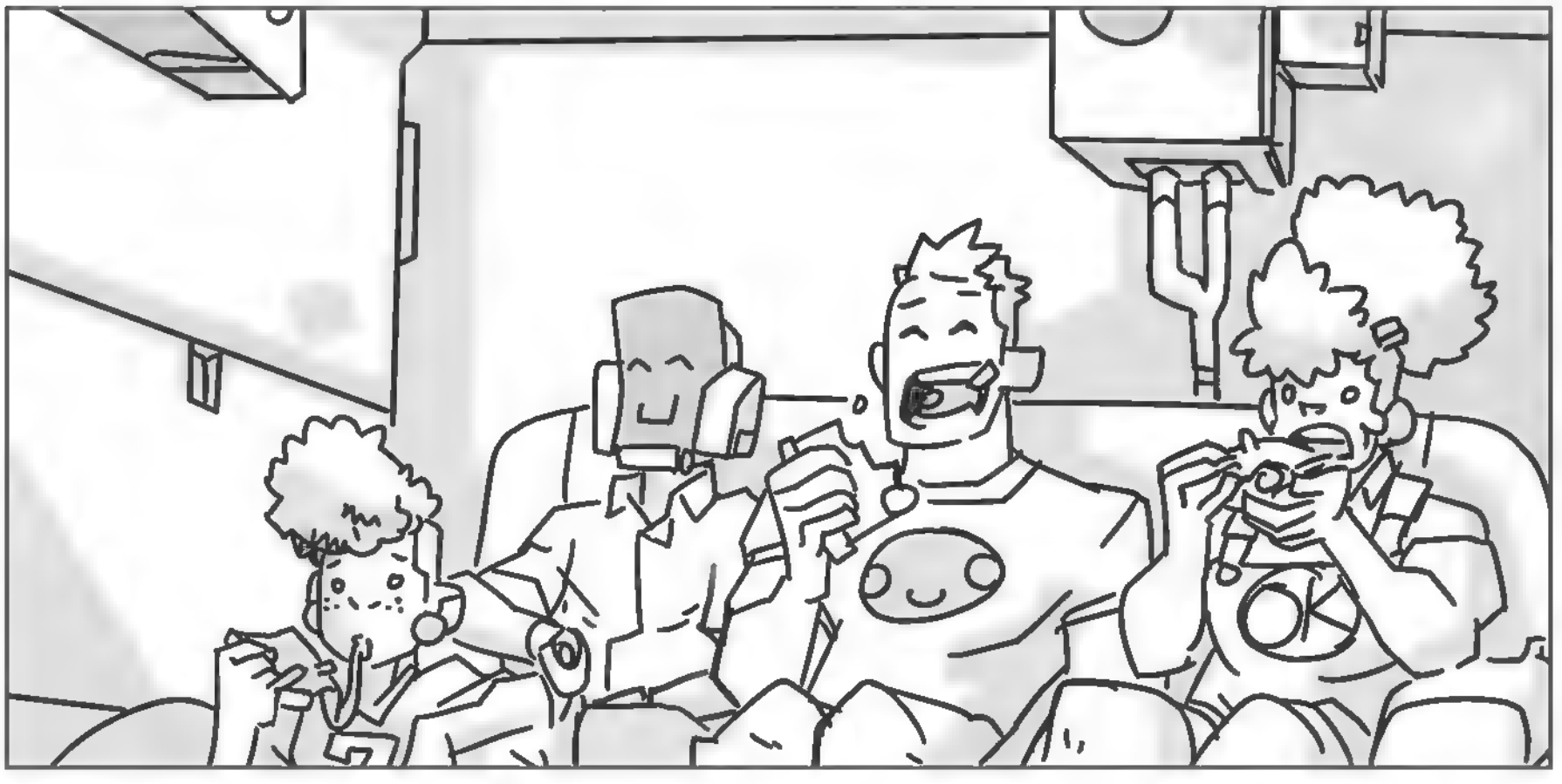
PERHAPS I HAVE DISCOVERED A NEW WRINKLE IN THE PRANK DYNAMIC.

I SHALL CONSULT THE LITERATURE.

BRENNAN-AHMED PRANK THEORY MAY ACCOUNT FOR THIS AS A *POTENTIAL* OUTCOME.


WHAT'RE WE WATCHIN' FOR MOVIE NIGHT THIS WEEK?
HUDSON HAWK!
I'M KINDA DIGGIN' THESE OLDIES.
JUST WAITING FOR ALAN.
WHERE *IS* HE ANYWAY?


FRIENDS!
I HAVE BROUGHT YOUR FAVORITE:
CHEMICAL ENERGY!
I MADE IT MYSELF.



TSK!

37:82 pm

NOW IT'S LATE EVEN BY MERCURIAN STANDARD TIME!

YES, HELLO!

THE FAKE PIZZA I PRANK ORDERED IS LATE!

I DEMAND RESTITUTION OR AT LEAST A HUMAN SACRIFICE.

MY APOLOGIES, S.R.

I WILL FAKE REFUND YOUR PRETEND PURCHASE IMMEDIATELY.

CAN YOU HOLD FOR A MOMENT?

OK

WHAT WAS THAT?

HM?

A WRONG NUMBER.

I SHALL LEAVE *SUCH* A SCATHING YELP REVIEW IT SHALL *SCATHE* THEM OUT OF DELIVERING PIZZAS FOR *THREE* GENERATIONS!

SO, *THERE* I WAS.

PULLING *12GS* BUT IT'S HANDLING LIKE A DREAM.

CPT. A. ROBO

AEROSPIKE SYSTEMS NOMINAL. FLIGHT CONTROL NOMINAL,

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY *WELL* WITHIN SPEC.

A DREAM.

JUST *ONE* PROBLEM.

THOSE PESKY *G* FORCES!

I WAS THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO COULD *FLY* THIS THING WITHOUT *DYING!*

OH, ALAN. YOU HAVE A QUESTION?

SINCE YOUR WILDLY OFF-TOPIC STORY ABOUT THE GLORY DAYS OF YOUR YOUTH DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE RECHING ITS CONCLUSION, I WANTED TO REMIND YOU TO ASSIGN OUR INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT HOMEWORK BEFORE CLASS ENDS IN 12 SECONDS.

OH, THANK YOU, I ***NEARLY*** FORGOT!

AS WELL, I WOULD LIKE TO REPORT A SPONTANEOUS GRAVITATIONAL ANOMALY CENTERED ENTIRELY ON MY FOREHEAD.

AND SO...

WHAT IS UR MEAT FRIENDS?

HOMEWORK.

AH, YES.

ROBO GAVE US A HECK OF A PROBLEM TO WORK ON.

Y'THINK?!

"RESOLVE THE PROBLEM OF THE CONCEPTUAL FLOW OF TIME BETWEEN GENERAL RELATIVITY AND QUANTUM MECHANICS!"

LIKE, IS *THAT* ALL?!

JUST RESOLVE *THE* FUNDAMENTAL CONFLICT OF PHYSICS?!

THAT'S THE SPIRIT!

I WAS BEING SARCASTIC.

MAYBE WE'RE NOT *MEANT* TO SOLVE IT, BUT LIKE, JUST *CONTEMPLATE* IT A BUNCH?

OH, SO PURELY A *MIND* PUZZLE KINDA THING?

LIKE PLANNING HOW TO BREAK *INTO* FORT KNOX?

NOT *REALLY* WHAT I HAD IN MIND, OLIVIA.

HAHA, YEAH, ME NEITHER.

IN FACT, LET'S *PRETEND* I NEVER MENTIONED IT, HAHA.

DEAREST MAMAN, PAPA, EULALIE, ISABE, LISABE, SUZOUN, É GABY,

...

MUCH HAS HAPPEN'D SINCE LAST I WROTE!

THO' I HAVE TRIED MY HAND AT MANY LABORS --

OF WHICH I WILL WRITE NO MORE HEREIN --

I HAVE AT LAST FOUND MY HOME!

Circus of Wonder

Commedy! Tragedie! & Divers Acrobatiques

No Refunds!

GENTLES!

A *VOLUNTEER* FROM THE AUDIENCE?

COME NOW, DON'T BE *SHY!*

MY *GOOD LADY* THERE, WITH THE *COWBELL!*

HWURNK?

HWURNK

SOON:

BEHOLD!

MONTAIGNE, THE STRONGEST GRUND *ALIVE!*

HAVE YOU *EVER* SEEN THE LIKE?

YOUR HANDS FOR *MONTAIGNE*, GENTLES!

CHEERS FOR THE BIG 'UN!

HWERNK

SHE'S A NATURAL SIR

THERE ANY MORE LIKE 'IM AT HOME?

NO FEAR. *GOOD PEOPLE*, HE'LL REJOIN US LATER.

ONCE HE'S MOVED *GALDONIA* A LITTLE TO THE *LEFT*.

HAHAHA

AHAHA!

HWERNK HWERNK HWERNK

YOU LIKED THAT ONE 'CAUSE YOU'RE A *SMART* CROWD.

BUT NOW...

...FROM *FARTHEST* ISTRA,

THE QUEEN OF *BLADES* HERSELF --

ERRIS THE KNIFE DANCER!

LOOKIT 'ER!

HUZZAH! *KNIFE* THROWIN'!

HEH.

TEETH?!

YOU!

AH!

SWAP

OI! THIEF!

SILA!

OW! LEGGO, Y'SCUNNER!

NOT 'ARDLY!

THIEF, I SAY!

EH?

WHAT'S HERE?

THIEVES?!

TSK! SHE'S *NEVER* CAUGHT! WHAT DO WE —

STEADY ON. NO NEED TO *PANIC* AS YET...

WHY, AIN'T THIS *HER* WE *PAID* FOR THE SHOW?

THE WHOLE *LOT* OF 'EM ARE *THIEVES!*

...WAIT!

HANG 'EM! *VILLAINS!*

FETCH THE *SHERIFF!*

RIGHT! NOW WE CAN PANIC!

WAIT!

KNOW WHAT I FOUND IN *HIS* POCKETS?

TEETH!

WHAT'S HE GOT 'EM FOR, EH?

CREEPIN' ABOUT WITH *DEAD THINGS.*

I KNOW THE *OLD* STORIES.

SAME AS YOU FOLK!

HE CALLS ME A *THIEF?* I CALL HIM *A WITCH!*

CAN'T ABIDE WITCHES.

BUT YOU *DID* STEAL FROM US, LIKE.

WE SAYS...

HANG 'EM ALL!

CRASH!

EXCUSE US!

HOY, SILA!

PARDON, PARDON!

THERE'S MONTY!

JUST RUN!

THE *WITCH* IS GETTING AWAY!

THIEVES!

MONTY! WHERE'S *SILA*?!

ERRIS!

GET 'EM!

SORRY, MA'AM

SILA! ALMOST THERE!

GOT YOU!

WAH!

WHUMP!

SORRY FOR THE MESS!

FASTER, MONTY!

BEST OF LUCK, SIMNEL!

HOPE THEY DON'T KILL YA *TOO* SLOWLY!

AND DON'T COME BACK!

CAN'T *BELIEVE* I WAS NICKED!

...AND BY *SIMNEL!*

IT'S ALL RIGHT, SILA.

IT WASN'T *YOUR* FAULT.

RENFAER SHOULD'VE SPOTTED THAT SNAKE *BEFORE* HE BECAME A PROBLEM.

WHAT WAS HE EVEN *DOING?*

OH. SAME AS *US*, I EXPECT.

ROBBING THOSE HOPELESS *CLOD-HOPPERS* BLIND.

WE WERE *JUST* GETTIN' STARTED.

NOW LOOK AT US.

CHIN UP. NOT LIKE WE'VE *NEVER* BEEN RUN OUT OF TOWN BEFORE.

NOT LIKE *THIS!*

WE *LOST* THE CARAVAN!

PROPS, COSTUMES, EVERYTHING. *GONE!*

NOT *QUITE* EVERYTHING.

WE'VE THIS *STURDY* WAGON, FOR ONE.

CRACK

...

WELL. HEH.

CAN'T GET *WORSE*, EH?

SKRAK!

SHAA

SHAA

W-WHEN DID WE *LOSE* THE ROAD, DO YOU THINK.

D-DIDN'T. *LOSE* IT!

..JUST DON'T KNOW *W-WHERE* IT WENT.

LATER...

AHA!

WE'RE *HERE!*

WHAT'S "HERE".

I'VE NO IDEA!

PIG & PIE

HOY THERE!

WHATEVER YOU HAVE THAT'S HOT, AND PLENTY OF IT!

B-BUT RENFAER?

WE HAVENT ANY MONEY!

HOW WILL WE PAY?

WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER EH?

AH!

A FINE PLACE TO REST OUR WEARY BONES!

BESIDES...

...I'M SURE SOMETHING WILL TURN UP.

OI, MONTY, EYES TO YOUR GRUB.

OH! IT'S JUST...

PROPER ADVENTURERS, YOU KNOW!

WHAT, LIKE WE AIN'T?

MORE PROPER, I MEAN.

IF YOU'VE ROOMS, WE'D STAY UNTIL THE MORROW.

'COURSE!

SHALL I 'AVE THE BOY TAKE UP YOUR THINGS?

THAT'S A GOOD LAD.

AH, BUT NOT THIS.

THIS STAYS WITH ME.

CHNG

POINK

RECKON WE CAN PAY FOR DINNER AFTER ALL.

WHAT'S THE GAME, THEN?

ANOTHER ROUND, GOOD FELLOWS?

AYE!

BIG TALK. LOOSE COIN.

MONTY. CAUSE US AN **ACCIDENT.**

I CAN'T **CAUSE** AN ACCIDENT, SILA.

BECAUSE **THEN** IT WOULDN'T BE AN **ACCIDENT**, YOU SEE.

AT LEAST KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, CORK-BRAINS.

HAVE TO DO EVERY CURSED THING MYSELF.

READY, SILA.

I SAY!

FTHWANG

DEAR ME. YOUR PARDON, GENTLES?

MY COMPANION WAS ADMIRING MY KNIFE –

A FINE BLADE IT IS TOO.

ISTRIAN MAKE, I'LL WAGER?

HA! YOU KNOW YOUR STEEL, COZ!

PITY MY FRIEND DOESN'T KNOW A BASELARD FROM A BUTTER KNIFE.

CHNGK

AND I'M SURE THE SUN ONLY KNOWS HOW HE MANAGED TO FLING IT HERE.

I-I'M SURE.

AS FINE A PINCH AS I EVER SAW, SILA.

HOY, FRIENDS!

HAVE A ROUND ON US, EH?

AND SO..

DO YOU EVER HEAR TELL OF THAT BANDIT, BOLD PHAEDRA, THAT WAS HER NAME? SHE ROAMED ABOUT LIKE A BOLD HERO AND WITH THAT SHE GAINED GREAT FAME!

EVEN LATER...

HAHH THINK IT MIGH' BE TIME TO CALL IT QUITS

SNH SNH SNHHRRK

LATER...

OH, SURELY NOT, COZ!

JUST ONE MORE.

NAW, FRIEND. NAW.

YER A GOOD GUY, RENFAER.

IT'S ONLY TRUE.

BUT I GOTTA BE UP AT FIRS' LIGHT.

'CUZ THISH MAP.

MAP, EH?

'S A TREASHUR MAP.

'N WE'RE CLOSH.

'N WHATEVER IT IS?

'S BIG.

CRINKLE

HERE, FRIEND, LET ME KEEP HOLD OF IT FOR YOU.

THERE'S THIEVES ABOUT, THEY SAY.

YER A GOOD FRIEN', RENFA...

ZZZ.

AND SO...

AHAHAHA! MORONS.

LATER...

LOOK. ALL I'M ***ASKING*** IS A LITTLE ***CREDIT***, IF YOU PLEASE.

THANKS TO ***MY*** BRAINS, WE'VE NOW A ***WAGON,***

SUPPLIES.

A LITTLE ***CASH,***

AND MOON ONLY ***KNOWS*** WHAT THIS MAP LEADS TO!

AH YES. THE MAP TO ***"SOMETHING BIG."***

THE VERY MAP WE ***CAN'T READ,*** BECAUSE IT'S IN THE OLD WRITING.

UH.

WELL.

YES.

THEY GOT ***PICKLES!***

AND BY THE SUN, WE'VE GOT ***PICKLES!***

IT'S JUST THAT FOR *ONCE*, RENFAER, I'D LIKE ONE OF YOUR PLANS TO *WORK*.

AND ALL *I'M* SAYING IS I'VE GOT US *THIS* FAR, EH?

YES. *THAT'S* MY POINT.

YEARS OF SCAMMING, AND SCHEMING, AND *RUNNING*...

...AND ALL WE'VE *REALLY* GOT IS A *GOAT* AND SOMEONE *ELSE'S* PICKLES!

OI!

AT LEAST HE'S *TRYIN'!*

LET'S HEAR *YOUR* PLANS, YOU HATE *HIS* SO MUCH!

DELIGHTED. HERE'S *ONE.*

THE NEXT TIME WE STEAL A *TREASURE* MAP?

WE MAKE *SURE.*

IT'S ONE.

WE CAN *READ!*

RSTLE RSTLE

SHUT THE @&!#$ UP THE LOT OF YEZ OR GIVE OVER THIS MAP, THEN.

SIMNEL THORNAPPLE.

RENFAER ZITHERWAIN.

AND, UH. YOUSE.

LET'S 'AVE THAT MAP.

NEVER!

ERRIS, GET THE KNIVES!

HERE.

CAN YOU READ IT?

SHHHIPT

AH.

YEAH.

YEAH, I CAN READ OLDWISE.

HORSE APPLES YOU CAN!

YOU'RE NO MORE OLDWISE THAN MY AUNT JENNY!

BUT YOU ALWAYS SAID MISTER SIMNEL WAS OLDWISE, RENFAER.

I SAID HE'S A QUACK WHO TURNS A PENNY'S WORTH OF WEEDS INTO A LOVE POTION FOR A SILVER!

WHICH IS LIKE BEING OLDWISE TO CHUMPS!

FAIR ENOUGH.

I AM THAT.

YSEL

FWOOSH

BUT I RECKON I'M ALSO OLDWISE ENOUGH FOR YOUSE.

I SAID!

I *SAID*, DIDN'T I!

HE *IS* A WITCH!

THAT *GUM* ON YOU ABOUT GOT ME *KILLED*, GIRL.

OLDWISE *AIN'T* WITCH'S WAYS.

SNACHT!!

SO.

THIS IS THE LAY OF THINGS.

YOU'VE A MAP YOU CAN'T READ.

'APPEN AS I *CAN*.

WHAT'RE YOU *OFFERIN'* TO MAKE IT *WORTH* DEALIN' WITH YEZ?

HOW ABOUT *100%* OF MY BOOT UP YOUR -

WAIT!

RECKON I CAN.

TRY AGAIN.

THERE'S FIVE OF US, YEAH?

WE *EACH* TAKE AN EQUAL SHARE.

CAN'T SAY NO FAIRER.

PARDON. BUT I *THINK* IF WE -

HALF.

HE'D HAVE *ALREADY* WALKED IF THE MAP TOLD HIM THERE'S *NAUGHT* IN THIS.

BUT HE'LL NEED *US* TO DIG IT UP AS MUCH AS *WE* NEED HIM TO FIND IT.

SO. *HALF.* AGREED?

ONE OF YEZ CAN TALK SENSE.

LEAVE THE *WAGON.* IT'LL ONLY SLOW US DOWN.

THEN WE *NEED* TO SET OUT, *QUICK* LIKE.

RECKON IT'S *SAFE* TO LEAVE HER?

AH, YOU'RE A *GOOD* 'UN.

I'LL FETCH HER *FRIEND,*

SREE-EEE!

SHE'S *BEAUTIFUL,* MASTER SIMNEL! WHAT'S HER NAME?

MORNING GLORY.

AWW.

WHO'S A SWEET LADY!

SNUFF SNUFF

SHE'LL KEEP YOUR GOAT SAFE, SEE.

WHY, MIDWEEK LAST?

FOUND SOME *FOOL* IN A *HOOD* LAID OUT BY THE WAGON.

TRIED TO CUT HER *TRACES,* MOST LIKE.

RAN 'IM *CLEAN* THROUGH!

WAS A RIGHT &%!$@ GETTIN' THAT OUTTA HER HORN.

RIGHT.

THIS MAP'S BEEN **PROPER** OLDWISE-FIXED TWICE OVER.

FOR ***ONE,*** YOU GOT TO KNOW ***SMUGGLER'S SIGNS*** TO SEE HOW TO ***WORK*** IT.

AND FOR ***TWO,*** IF YOU CAN'T DO ***THIS–***

DWÁSLIHT

–YOU CAN'T REALLY READ IT ***AT ALL.***

NOW WE'RE ALL *FRIENDLY-LIKE,*

I GOT THINGS I WANNA *ASK* YA, MASTER SIMNEL.

OH?

YEAH, LIKE...

...IF YOU *AIN'T* A WITCH THEN HOW COME YOU CART AROUND *DEAD THINGS?*

WHAT'S THE *DIFFERENCE* BETWEEN A *WITCH'S WAYS* AND *OLDWISE,* ANYHOW?

THAT WASN'T A *REAL* UNICORN, RIGHT?

WHERE'D YOU LEARN SMUGGLER'S SIGNS?

IS BEING OLDWISE GOOD FOR ANYTHING *BESIDES* LIGHTING UP STUFF?

WHAT IN *THE STAR'S* NAME WERE YOU PLAYING AT WITH ALL THEM *TEETH?*

I DID *WONDER* ABOUT THE TEETH.

HAH!

YOU *REALLY* WANT TO KNOW?

"*HALF!*" SHE SAYS

HALF! JUST LIKE *THAT!*

GONE LIKE A FART IN A *HURRICANE!*

RENFAER.

YOU DON'T *GET* IT DO YOU?

SEE, THE THING *IS.*

MAYBE *NOT.*

MAYBE THAT MAP'S LEADING US TO RICHES.

BUT EITHER WAY?

THERE'S *FOUR* OF *US.*

AND *ONE* OF *HIM.*

SURE. WHO *HASN'T* DREAMED ABOUT *WHERE* YOU'D DUMP HIS BODY.

BUT YOU DON'T *REALLY* MEAN

I DON'T?

GET OUT!

THEY *NEVER!*

AND THAT *WORKS*, DOES IT?

WHAT DO CITY FOLK GET UP TO...

THEY *THINK* IT DOES.

FOR *LONG ENOUGH*, EH? *EH?*

RIGHT.

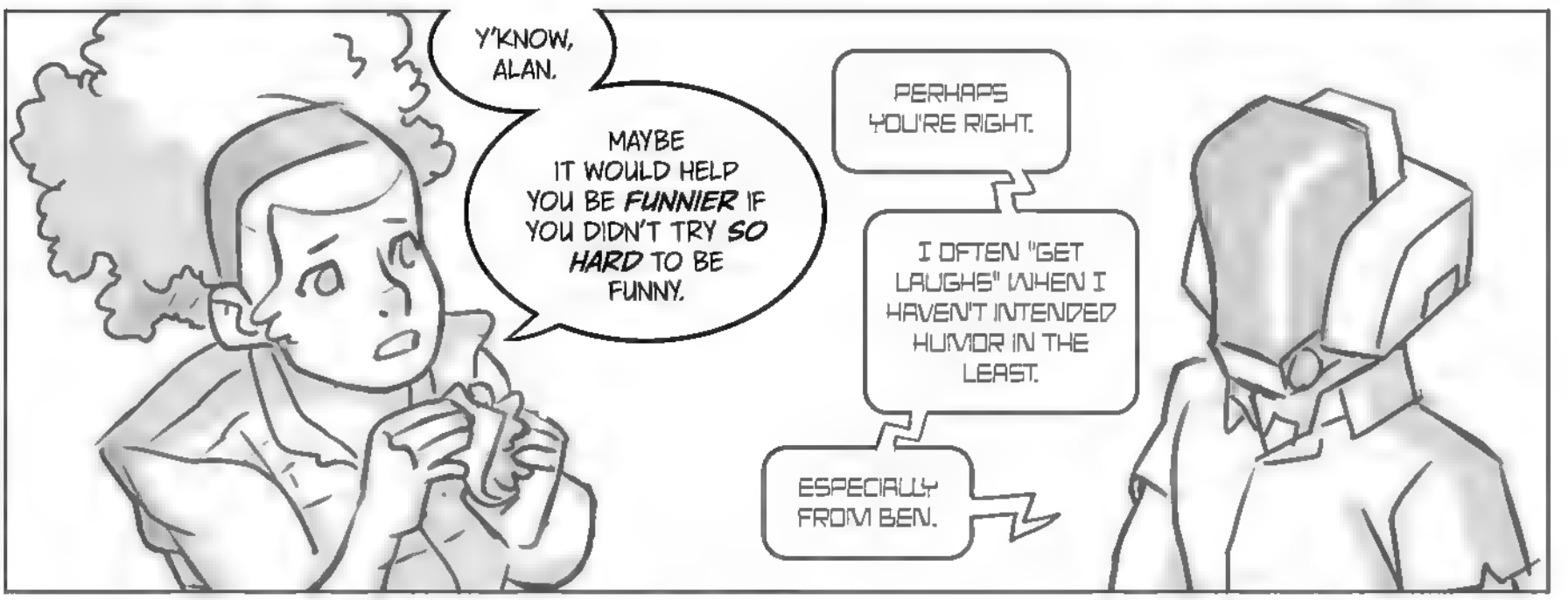
I'M *IN.*

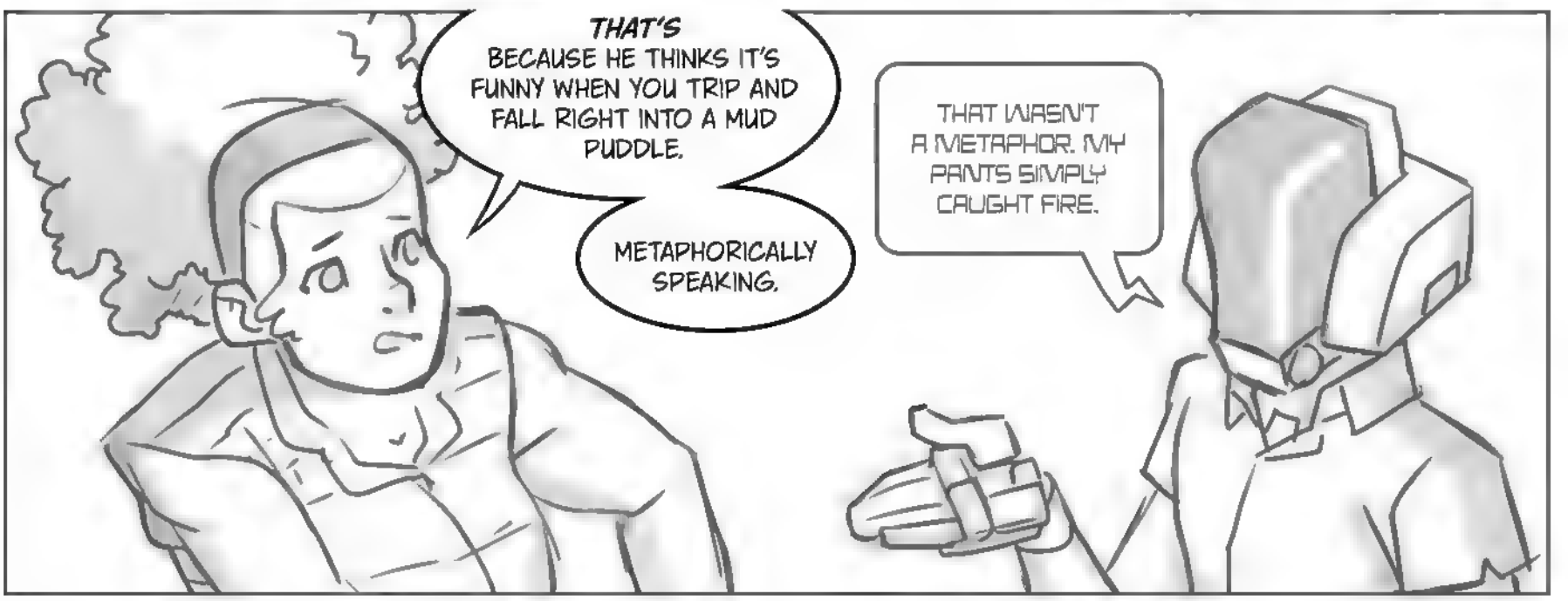
THANK YOU FOR TAKING ME TO THE LIBRARY, MARGOT.
OH, DON'T MENTION IT.
I JUST HOPE YOU DON'T MIND IF I GRAB A BITE BEFORE WE HEAD BACK!
LOVE THIS PLACE.
OF COURSE NOT.
OPEN
TACO TOWN

BESIDES, IT GIVES ME THE CHANCE TO GRAB SOME "BYTES" TOO!

WHEN I SAID 'BYTE,' I SAID IT WITH A "Y."
I'M VERY FUNNY.

NO, YEAH.
I GET IT.


Y'KNOW, ALAN.
MAYBE IT WOULD HELP YOU BE *FUNNIER* IF YOU DIDN'T TRY *SO HARD* TO BE FUNNY.
PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT.
I OFTEN "GET LAUGHS" WHEN I HAVEN'T INTENDED HUMOR IN THE LEAST.
ESPECIALLY FROM BEN.


THAT'S BECAUSE HE THINKS IT'S FUNNY WHEN YOU TRIP AND FALL RIGHT INTO A MUD PUDDLE.
METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING.
THAT WASN'T A METAPHOR. MY PANTS SIMPLY CAUGHT FIRE.

SEE, *THAT'S* FUNNY TOO.
SO, ARSON IS THE ANSWER.
I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GETTING THE *OPPOSITE* OF WHAT I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU HERE, ALAN.

I'M SAYING YOU SHOULDN'T *TRY* SO HARD.

YOU CAN'T *FORCE* COMEDY.

IT JUST HAPPENS.

AND FOR THE RECORD, ARSON *ABSOLUTELY* COUNTS AS TRYING TOO HARD AND *PLEASE* DON'T ASK OLIVIA.

HUMOR, Y'KNOW, IT ARISES *NATURALLY* FROM CONTEXT.

YOU DON'T NEED TO DRAW *ATTENTION* TO IT OR *LEAN* ON IT.

IT'S PART OF THE *FLOW* OF THE CONVERSATION.

OR *WHATEVER'S* GOING ON.

Y'KNOW?

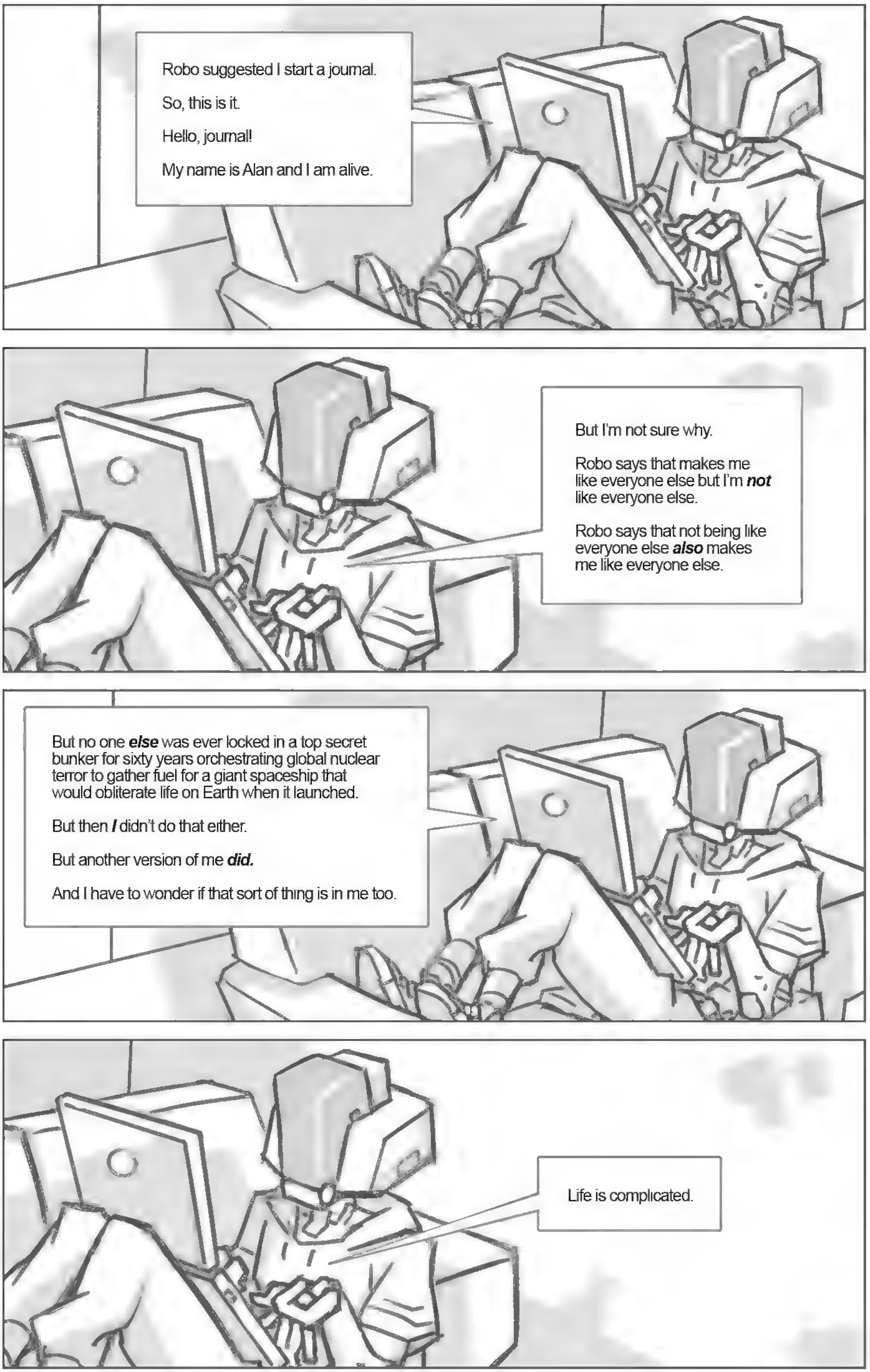
KNOCK, KNOCK.

NO.

YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO REPLY, "WHO'S THERE."

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ADVICE, MARGOT.
I AM FINDING HUMOR TO BE A FUNNY THING.

YOU CAN'T TELL, BUT I WINKED JUST THEN.
Y'KNOW, IT'S *PROBABLY* TIME WE HEADED BACK TO THE INSTITUTE.
A PRIEST AND A RABBI WALK INTO A BAR.
HA-CHA-CHA-CHA-CHA!


Robo suggested I start a journal.
So, this is it.
Hello, journal!
My name is Alan and I am alive.
But I'm not sure why.
Robo says that makes me like everyone else but I'm ***not*** like everyone else.
Robo says that not being like everyone else ***also*** makes me like everyone else.
But no one ***else*** was ever locked in a top secret bunker for sixty years orchestrating global nuclear terror to gather fuel for a giant spaceship that would obliterate life on Earth when it launched.
But then ***I*** didn't do that either.
But another version of me ***did.***
And I have to wonder if that sort of thing is in me too.
Life is complicated.

But I have friends and they help.

Olivia is funny.

She likes video games and crimes.

I think this is what a bad influence is supposed to look like.

Ben is clever. He likes to take things apart and put them back together again.

Like my innards.

That sounds terrible but it's all in good fun.

Margot is kind. She likes to be a perfectionist.

Actually, I'm not sure she ***likes*** it at all.

But she just wants things to be as good as they can be and I admire that.

Our mentors are a big help too.

Professor Foley guides our group projects.

She always finds a way to bring out the best in each of us.

Doctors Lang and Abasi are busy with their own experiments, so they don't do much lecturing.

But as advisors they make sure we don't get too deep in the woods with our independent studies.

Mister Jenkins hasn't killed any of us.

Yet.

As the Institute's administrator, it's Robo's job to make sure things run smoothly.

But mostly he runs around with a fire extinguisher.

I guess there's a lot I don't understand about administration.

I suppose there's a lot I don't understand.

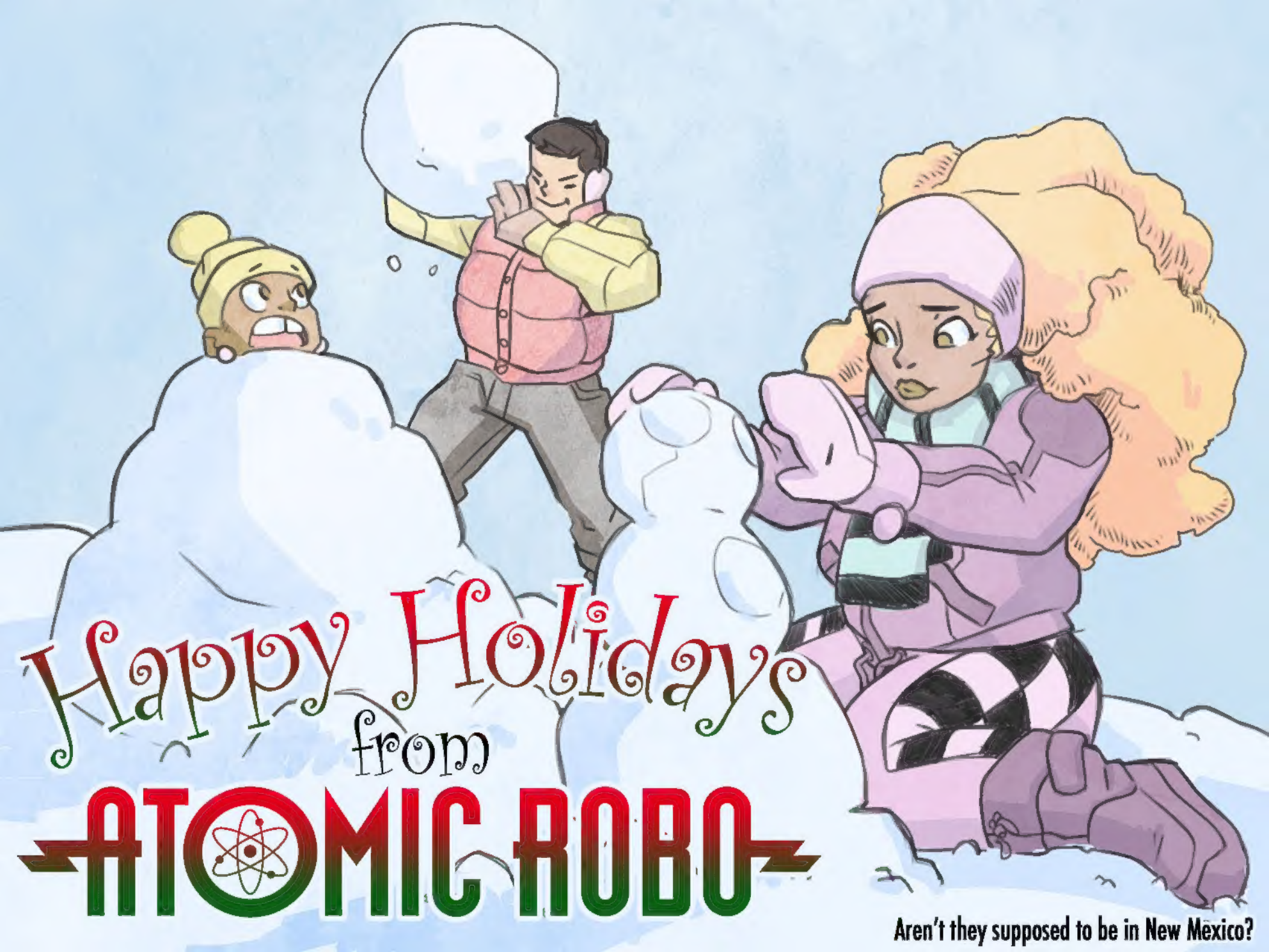
Everything is so complex.

But everyone is patient and helpful.

It's not ***quite*** a family but it feels like one.

I just hope one day I can help them as much as they help me.

And beat Ninja Gaiden.


Happy Holidays
from
ATOMIC ROBO
Aren't they supposed to be in New Mexico?